

THE MISSION OF LIFE

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

“ The Mission of Life ” by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is the combined edition of two previous publications, “ Dreams of a Youth ” and “ In Quest of the New ”—both written by Netaji himself.

These two books have already run into several editions in Bengali, Hindi and Tamil and it is hoped that the present volume will also be appreciated by many in India and outside.

Netaji Bose had been a dreamer of dreams but what makes him immeasurably great is the way he dedicated himself to the realisation of his dreams.

These are the dreams of a man of character, a character forged in the furnace of endless suffering.

Ideals have to be lived, not merely preached. Netaji embodied in himself the very spirit of renunciation of which he writes so passionately and persistently throughout this book.

Viewed in the light of his glorious achievements, his words acquire a significance of their own. No empty words these—but words sanctified by practice. Here is a man who speaks more in deeds than in words. Sincerity of purpose is the greatest sanction behind a leading voice.

The book breathes that sincerity of purpose which has marked every little action of his most extraordinary career.

I venture to place this volume in the hands of my countrymen in the hope that his words will inspire them in the same way as his deeds have done.

I am thankful to Profs. Nirmal Chatterjee and Hirendra Nath Dutt of Viswa-Bharati, Santi-Niketan, for translating the Bengali portions of the books into English. I am also grateful to Mr. M. V. Gough-Govia of Thacker's Press & Directories, Ltd., and his staff for their great care in publishing the book.

Jai Hind.

GOPALLAL SANYAL.

September, 1949.

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DREAMS OF A YOUTH

We have come to this earth to fulfil some purpose; we have a message to give to the world. The sun rises in the sky to light up the whole universe; flowers blossom in order to sweeten the air with their fragrance, the stream rushes forward to offer its abundance of water to the sea. Likewise we have come to this earth with our joyful youth and full-blooded life in order to establish some great Truth. With single-minded devotion and practical experience of life we have to discover that unknown and secret purpose of life which transforms an otherwise meaningless existence into a fruitful one.

Full of youthful vigour we have come to this earth to give a taste of joy to all fellowmen, because we represent the very spirit of joy. We shall move about on this earth as the living embodiments of joy and mirth. We ourselves shall laugh and make the whole world laugh with us. Wherever we may turn our eyes, the gloom of melancholy will vanish like mist, and the living touch of our joy shall remove all maladies and sorrows and sufferings from this earth which, to many, is a veritable vale of tears.

We have brought with us the divine gifts of hope and zeal, renunciation and courage. We have come to create things because in creation is real joy. We shall carry on our creative work with all the physical energies at our command, and all our creations will be instinct with the spirit of Truth and Beauty and

Good, which we have realized in our own being. We shall lose ourselves in the great joy born of self-immolation, and all this joy will turn this earth into an abode of happiness.

There can be no end to our sacrifice, no end to our duties, for,—

The more we shall give of our lives
The more ceaseless will be the flow of life.
We have so much to talk about, so much to sing about
And there's such an excess of life in us.
There's so much of joy, so much of hope,
The cup of life is full to the brim.

We have come equipped with endless hopes, unbounded enthusiasm, and indomitable courage—there is no power on earth that can stop the onward rush of life in us. Let doubt and despair block our way like a mountain, let the antagonism of entire mankind try to resist us, still our joyful march shall continue all the same.

We have a religion of our own. We recognize no other religion. We are the votaries of all that is new and unknown and beautiful. We give a touch of freshness to what is old and worn out, we infuse life into what is lifeless, we invigorate the old with the Spirit of Youth, and discover the Infinite in the finite. We do not feel bound to abide by the lessons of history on all occasions. We are the pilgrims of eternity, but we would much rather follow the unknown path. The uncertain future has always a fascination for us. We must have the right to make blunders. That is why most people fail to sympathize with us. To them we are nothing but a set of dare-devil fanatics.

But we thoroughly enjoy being what we are. We are proud of ourselves. The youth by its very nature is bound to be desperate and dare-devil. It has been so everywhere and at all times. Urged on by unfulfilled aspirations we rush forward ceaselessly—we have no time to listen to the counsel of the elders. We may commit blunders, we may go astray, we may stumble down, but we never lose our zeal, we never flinch. There is no end to our dare-devilry because we are ceaselessly on the march.

The history of freedom in all countries has been our making. It is not our business to preach the message of peace. We rather sow seeds of dissension, incite warfare, and bring destruction in our wake. We strike at the very root of dogmatism, superstition, narrowness, and all that stands in the way of our progress. Our only business is to keep the path of freedom clear of impediments so that the soldiers of freedom may march along unobstructed.

To us human life is the one great Truth. Hence the freedom we want (and life without that freedom is a torture—the freedom for which we have been smilingly shedding our blood for ages and ages) must be complete. We have come to preach the message of freedom in all spheres of life. To all fields of human activity—social, religious, economic and political—we shall bring with us the light of truth, a thrill of joy and a breadth of vision.

We have been singing the song of freedom from times immemorial. The longing for freedom runs through our veins even from our infancy. The piteous cry we give out at the time of birth is nothing but a note of protest against worldly bonds. In

infancy our only strength lies in crying but as we attain to youth we depend both on our brain and our brawn. And what have we not accomplished with our physical and mental powers? Read the history of Phoenicia, Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome, Turkey, England, France, Germany, Russia, China, Japan, India or that of any other country, and you will find our achievements recorded in burning letters on every page of history. We have made and unmade Kings and Emperors. We have helped them to the throne and again at a turn of our finger they have had to abdicate and take to flight for life. On the one hand we have built up the Tajmahal, a representation in marble of tearful love, while on the other we have besmeared the face of the earth with a regular flow of blood. Society, state, art, literature and science have grown up from age to age mainly as a result of our corporate efforts. Again when we have played a destructive role, social structures and empires have come down to dust at the angry stamp of our feet.

At long last we have discovered our own strength; we have come to recognize our native genius. Now, who is going to dominate or exploit us? The greatest fact, the greatest hope that emerges from this new awakening is the self-determination of the youth. Once the dormant soul of the youth has been awakened, life in all its spheres will be illumined by its blood-red rays. This youth movement is all-pervading and universal in its scope and function. One marked characteristic of the present-day world is the manner in which the generation has asserted itself boldly and defiantly in the face of the cold challenge thrown by

the older generation. Who can deny that this new force will illumine the whole world with a divine light?

Awake, arise, my young comrades, look! the new day is dawning!

May, 1923.



Hundred and fifty years ago it was the Bengalees who betrayed the country to their foreign enemies. The Bengalees of the twentieth century certainly owe it to themselves to atone for that great sin. It will be the duty of Bengal's men and women to revive the lost glory of India. How best to accomplish that end is Bengal's greatest problem.

Although Mahatma Gandhi, who is the sponsor of the national movement, happens to be a non-Bengalee, still no other province can claim national activities on such a tremendous scale as Bengal. This has been my impression after having visited the provinces of Bihar, the U. P., Bombay, and the C. P.

Bengal may be lagging behind in other spheres of life but I am firmly convinced that in the fight for Swaraj she goes far ahead of others. I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that India will attain Swaraj and the task of establishing that Swaraj will devolve largely on the Bengalees. I have heard many people regret why the Bengalees did not become like Marwaris or Bhatias. I shall, however, pray to God so that the Bengalees may remain Bengalees for ever.

In the Geeta, Sree Krishna says, "It is better to die for one's own convictions; whatever is foreign to one's nature is always a source of danger." If the

Bengalees go against the native genius of the race they will be guilty of committing suicide. God has not given us material wealth but He has blessed us with the wealth of life. Now, if we start running after material wealth we shall be selling our birthright for a mess of pottage.

The people of Bengal must not forget that she occupies a distinctive place not only in India but also in the whole world, and that she will have duties to perform peculiar to the position she holds. Bengal has got to win her freedom, and having won her freedom she will have to build up a new India. The new India will be created by Bengal's genius through a revival of her literature, science, art, and music coupled with a renewed interest in physical culture and social service. The Bengalees alone are capable of bringing about a cultural synthesis and effecting comprehensive development of our national life.

I do believe that the Bengalees have a distinctive characteristic of their own which shows itself in their education, their culture, and their character. There is a distinctive feature even in Bengal's landscape. Don't you notice that characteristic in Bengal's soil, her rivers, her sky, her green fields, and tanks fringed with palm trees? And don't you really feel that these natural features have lent a peculiar grace to the character of the Bengalees? The soft soil of Bengal that gave them birth accounts for the very rich and responsive mind possessed by the Bengalees. Nurtured in the lap of bountiful nature they have easily become worshippers of Beauty. Born and bred in a land of plenty, of rivers and green fields, the

Bengalees have been able to show wonderful creative genius in poetry and literature.

The great awakening that swept the land of Bengal like a flood during the last two or three years is now at an ebb. But the flow tide will not be long to return. The tide of nationalism will again sweep through Bengal and bring about a great revival in Bengal's life and thought. The Bengalees will stake their all in their mad ardour for freedom, and the country will make a determined bid to throw off the foreign yoke.

What exact shape this new movement will take nobody can foretell, nor can anybody say who is going to be its high-priest. The great man who is destined to lead that movement must be there already, but who knows where he is and what process of preparation he is going through at this moment. Whether Mahatma Gandhi will lead the movement or some other great man will spring up and take his place is more than we can tell at present.

We need not, however, waste our time over these questions. We have got to prepare ourselves right from now for this new upsurge of life. The process of preparation will go on slowly through all our thoughts and actions, our enjoyments, renunciations, and meditations, so that when the final call will come it will at once find us ready to respond.

Bengal, our motherland, again wants a band of young Sanyasis or selfless workers. Friends, if you are ready to sacrifice yourselves, do please come forward. Our mother can offer you nothing but sufferings and privations, starvation and imprisonment. If like the god Nilakantha you can unflinchingly face

all sufferings and privations, do come forward then. The mother needs you all. God willing, if you survive to the end, you will be able to enjoy the free air of Independent India. If, on the other hand, you have to lay down your lives in the service of your motherland, the kingdom of Heaven will be opened unto you. Come forward then, if you are really the heroic sons of the motherland.

My young comrades, the history of freedom all over the world has been your making. Now in the midst of this universal awakening, when the whole world is resounding with the message of freedom, how can you afford to remain asleep? Life and death have been no consideration to you, and in every country it is you who have built up the edifice of freedom on the sacred foundation of self-sacrifice. In return for all your services you received nothing but suffering and privation. You have never cared for material gain and you have never known what is called fear. Inspired by love of freedom alone you have smilingly embraced death like brave fighters. The sign of victory shines bright on your fair foreheads.

Youths of Bengal, allow me to call you to the sacred duty of service to the country. Come one, come all, wherever you happen to be. Hark, don't you hear the clarion call of our Mother? Look at the eastern sky where the god of India's destiny is fast appearing in the shape of the rising sun. Blessed with freedom, China, Japan, Turkey, and even Egypt have taken honoured positions in the comity of nations. Do you mean to keep on sleeping under a spell even now? Awake, arise, it won't do to waste any more time. The sin committed by your forefathers in the

eighteenth century in letting in foreign traders inside the country must be atoned for by you in the present century. The newly awakened soul of India is crying aloud for emancipation. Let us all be bound by one tie of brotherhood, and take the sacred vow of regaining India's freedom and restoring all her past glory and magnificence.

December, 1925.



There are different stages in a man's life, namely infancy, youth, middle age, and old age. Likewise, a nation's life, too, is marked by the same successive stages. Man dies and passes through a physical transformation. A nation, too, dies and through death attains a new life. There is, however, one difference between an individual and a nation. All nations do not necessarily come back to life after death. A nation which has forfeited all claims to exist, whose vitality has been completely spent up, will naturally disappear from the face of the earth, or somehow drag on a vile existence, no better than that of a worm, so that there will be hardly any trace of its existence outside the pages of history.

The Indian nation died more than once, but every time it had its resurrection, because there was justification for its existence. India has a message to give to the world. There is something in India's culture which mankind cannot do without, a culture which is essential for the fullest development of human civilization. Even in the fields of science, art, literature, trade and commerce, our nation has something to give to the world. That is why the sages of India kept the lights of learning burning through

ages and ages of darkness. As their descendants, how can we die before we have fulfilled that higher purpose of our race?

The human body may go down to dust, but the soul never dies. It is just the same with a nation too. Although a nation may die her soul lives on in the shape of her civilization, culture and tradition. When a nation loses its creative genius it becomes certain that the nation is going to die. Its people know nothing better than eating, sleeping and procreating, and their life's mission consists only in mechanically following the beaten track. Some nations may survive even this kind of demoralization provided, of course, there is some justification for its existence. When that nation is in a state of decline, she somehow preserves her own civilization, culture and tradition and never loses her identity by reason of her contact with other nations. Then comes a revival either by a turn of fortune or by Divine Will. The veil of darkness lifts slowly, the sleeping nation wakes up and gradually her creative genius returns. Life blossoms like the thousand-petalled lotus and reveals itself in numerous directions in varied forms of Truth and Beauty.

India has passed through many such deaths and subsequent revivals because she has a mission of her own and that mission is yet to be fulfilled.

Only those among India's sons and daughters are really alive who have a firm faith in that mission of India. It would not be correct to say that all the three hundred and thirty million people of India are really alive. I can only say that the youths of India are truly alive in as much as they have that faith in the country's mission.

When I spent month after month in prison outside India, I would frequently ask myself, "What is that thing which instead of breaking down our spirit by continued imprisonment sustains and strengthens it?" The answer that would inwardly suggest itself was this: India has a mission of her own, she has a glorious future, and we are heirs to that great legacy. The history of a new and free India will be our creation. It is the strength of this faith that enables us to endure all sufferings and to ignore the dreary present. All difficulties will melt away before that idealism of ours. The youth of India can defy death only because of this unfailing and unflinching faith in a great ideal.

Only people inspired by such faith and idealism come to possess that creative gift which enables them to serve their country in the proper manner. All great achievements in the world are the results of man's faith in himself and his creative power. A person without faith in either himself or his nation is incapable of creating anything.

Indians have many failings, but they have one great quality which has outweighed many of their faults and secured for them a status in the comity of nations. Indians possess self-confidence, an emotional fervour and a lively imagination. This has enabled Indians to nurture great ideals even in the face of failures, frustrations and numerous other odds of present-day life. They know how to lose themselves completely in the pursuit of their ideal and to make supreme efforts in performing what appears seemingly impossible to achieve. It is simply because of living faith and power of imagination that India was able to give birth to such a great number of worthy sons, and

many more are yet to be born. No amount of suffering or repression can crush the Indian spirit. A nation inspired by a spirit of idealism will gladly face all sufferings for the establishment of the ideal.

Many of us believe that suffering is an unmixed evil, that it is nothing but a painful experience. This, however, is not the truth. If suffering involves pain, on the one hand, it is at the same time a source of infinite joy. When one misses that joy, suffering degenerates into the worst kind of pain. One is then simply crushed under the wheels of suffering. But to the person who has once tasted the great joy of suffering, it at once becomes something noble and inspiring, and far from breaking his spirit makes him even stronger and nobler. Now one might ask, "Where is the source of that joy? Where is the source of the lightning that flashes across the sky on a dark and cloudy night?" I think, the joy springs from one's devotion to one's ideal. The man who undergoes suffering for the sake of the ideal he loves, never thinks that he has suffered in vain. On the contrary, his suffering is transformed into joy which infuses a hitherto unknown strength into his veins. The real significance of life will be revealed to you only when you have sacrificed yourself for the sake of an ideal, and then it will unfold its hidden treasures to you.

Last April in Insein Jail I was reading a Russian novel in which I found an echo of the same sentiments. The author puts the following words in the mouth of the hero through whom he addresses the Russian people :

"There is much suffering in store for the people, much of their blood will yet flow, squeezed out by the hand of greed;

but for all that, all my suffering, all my blood is a small price for that which is already stirring in my breast, in my mind, in the marrow of my bones ! I am already rich as a star is rich in golden rays. And I will bear all, will suffer all, because there is within me a joy which no one, nothing can ever stifle ! In this joy there is a world of strength."

Inspired by the spirit of Nilakantha, or the God Siva, one must say, "There's a fountain of joy within me. Hence I can take the sorrows and sufferings of all as my own. I can go through any amount of suffering, for suffering will lead me to truth." Such a man will attain fulfilment in life as sure as anything

We shall have to make supreme efforts to realize our ideal. Those who would create a new India must give their all, and their whole life must be a tale of endless sacrifice. They will give everything until they become paupers, and they will never ask for anything in return. Lives must be laid down in order to give birth to a new life in the country. Those who will dedicate themselves to the task of creating that new life must have faith, idealism, and a spirit of joy.

A few days ago I met a student-friend of mine who asked me a few questions which betrayed a sense of despair and a certain lack of faith on his part. His questions seemed to indicate that ours was a hopeless case and that our country would never look up. After I had answered some of his questions he asked me, "What's the use of entering the councils, fighting the government there and throwing out the ministries?" I said in reply, "Just tell me how we profit by not doing it." Then observing his lack of faith and enthusiasm I said, "Look here, you are much younger than I am. It must have been your idealism that made you join the Non-co-operation Movement. My idealism has

gone on increasing with the advance of years but in your case it seems to be ebbing away day by day." The young man had to confess then that he had to go through various troubles and difficulties during the last few years and that this had brought about a change in his outlook.

There is no denying, however, that Bengal's public life has been marked by a lack of faith and idealism during these two years. This has to some extent crippled our public activities and the time has come when we must get rid of this weakness. There can be no greater enemy than that which gnaws you from within. Lack of faith within us must be conquered before we can conquer our enemies without. We shall be able to conquer the whole world if we can only strengthen our faith in our ideal, in our powers and in the glorious future of India.

There are especially two features in India's present-day life that could inspire one with hope. These are, first, a love of physical culture and a desire to tour round the world, and secondly, a new awakening among our youths. So far as Bengal is concerned the Bengalees were at one time branded as cowards. That stigma has now been removed. Not even the worst enemy of Bengal would dare to utter that calumny again. But the Bengalees are still stigmatized as being physically poor. The Bengalees have to get over this disability too. I am really glad to notice that centres for physical culture are springing up everywhere and that the Bengalees seem to be determined to remove that stigma. Physical culture must be organized on a nation-wide scale so that the whole race may go through a sort of physical transformation.

Only the creation of a handful of champion wrestlers would not serve our purpose. The exploits of world-champions may bring glory to the nation, but it will not add to the strength of the average Bengalee. A nation is judged not by its best representatives alone, the man in the street must be taken into consideration.

That Indian youths are showing interest in touring round the world is undoubtedly the most encouraging sign. Who could have imagined only twenty years ago that our youths would leave the safe corners of their homes for journeys abroad on foot or on bicycles? In this longing to see unknown lands, to follow unknown tracks, to contact unknown people, lies the secret which goes to the building up of nations and empires. Nations which refuse to go outside their small circles are destined to die. On the other hand, the peoples of nations which ignore all obstacles and even defy death in their longing to visit foreign lands will grow both physically and mentally and at the same time extend the bounds of their empire. When poet Dwijendralal said, "I was born in this land, and my only prayer is that I die too in this land," he was putting up a wrong ideal in front of us. The time has come when we should rather say,

"I won't go back home, no, by no means,
The lure of the outer world has driven me mad."

We have to leave the cosy corners of our homes and go out into the wider world. We must get to know our own country minutely, and then we shall go from one country to another and sail beyond the seas in search of new and unknown lands. Such a nation will gain in courage, strength of character, knowledge and experience. At the same time it will thrive in

commercial enterprises and even succeed in establishing empires. This love of travel alone accounts for the phenomenal rise of the British race and the vast empire they succeeded in building up. Although we do not think in terms of an empire, still it goes without saying that travelling in foreign lands will broaden our outlook, add to our knowledge and experience, strengthen our self-confidence and develop our intellectual powers. Of course, the best way to travel is on foot, on horse-back, or on a bicycle, instead of doing it in the manner of the rich American tourists of to-day.

Another happy sign of the times is the awakening among our youths. This restlessness is the sign of life. The youths are awake, awake to their own sense of duty. That is why we hear of youth conferences being held everywhere. It has been said that the youths are willing to work but they do not know exactly which way to take. Others think that youths are unable to do anything for want of proper leadership. For myself it is enough that the youths are awake and conscious of their duties and responsibilities. It does not matter so much if leadership is absent and there is a certain amount of confusion about their plan of work. I would like to ask them one thing,—"Supposing you do not find a leader, would you choose to sit idle then?" Why not create leaders from amongst yourselves and go ahead with your work? Leaders do not drop from the skies, they are forged in the actual process of work. And then it would not do to sit idle on the plea that you do not know which way to go. Try to find out the way according to your own light. The problem is not quite as difficult as it

appears to be. Our idea is to build up an ideal nation—a nation that could take its place amongst the most advanced races of the world in knowledge and achievement, in education and morals. What is needed, therefore, is awakening in every field of national life. Everybody has to choose his own field of activity according to his aptitude and capacity. Let everybody develop his God-given gifts as best as he can, and then dedicate it to the service of his motherland.

- During these twenty years India has seen quite a number of outstanding personalities in the fields of science, literature and politics. Many of them, who rendered great services to the country, are now dead. The country still mourns their loss, but it is a matter of shame that their places have not yet been taken up by able successors. So long as a nation preserves its vitality, places are never left vacant like this—one great man is always succeeded by another. Men of worth are never wanting in a nation that addresses itself to its problems in a spirit of dedication. India is still far from the fulfilment of her destiny since new leaders are slow to come forward to take the place of the old ones.

You cannot build up an ideal nationhood unless you keep in view the comprehensive picture of a fully developed nation. A nation's life, like that of a man, requires an harmonious development in all its spheres and when a new spirit invigorates the body-politic of a nation its growth is as quick as it is sure.

Young India must discover its own powers and its possibilities. Our youths must learn to rely on their own strength. The task of building up a new nation devolves on them and them alone. Such a great task

requires a complete dedication of life. One hopeful sign is that our youths are not unaware of their great responsibilities. The sacrificial fire is alight. My young comrades, come forward, one and all. Let us sacrifice ourselves at the altar of our Motherland. "Do or Die"—let this be our motto.

September, 1926.

LIFE IN JAILS

1

[Written from Mandalay Jail to Sriyut Anathbandhu Datta,
Asst. Secretary, South Calcutta Sevak Samiti.]

Mandalay Jail,
December, 1926.

Dear friend,

Your letter dated Nov. 9 was duly to hand. Please don't mind this delay in my sending a reply. If I were to have my own way perhaps I would not have written at all, because it is not desirable to have any connection with a State-prisoner. Nevertheless, I am writing to you, for I know you would be waiting for the reply and may be glad to have it.

It was certainly very good of you to meet in a body to pray for my health and early release, and I am really grateful to you for sending me your good wishes. As an humble servant of the country I cannot expect a greater reward than this. It is not necessary for me to say how glad I was to receive your letter and to read the report of your meeting in the newspapers. I know that this feeling of pleasure does not reveal an ideal state of mind. But I can't help it. Although I aspire to be a servant of the country I am after all a human being with all his failings. Who could possibly resist the desire to have love and affection and regard? It would be very nice indeed to conquer all such desires and longings. A genuine worker must not think of getting any return for his service. But so far as I am concerned, that is an ideal

yet to be reached. If I were to speak out the honest truth, I very often feel like Alexander Selkirk—

“My friends, do they now and then
Send a wish or a thought after me?”

I have been in jail for fourteen months now. Of these, no less than eleven have been spent in far-off Burma. Sometimes I feel that these fourteen long months have passed away rather quickly. Again there are times when I feel as if I have been here for ages and ages. The prison is, as though, my home; the world outside is all a dream and mystery to me and the only reality in the world seems to consist of iron railings and stone walls. Indeed, it is like living in a strange world. Sometimes I feel, one who has never been in jail has seen little or nothing of the world. He has missed most of the realities of life. I have analysed my own mind and am sure these thoughts are not due to any jealousy on my part. In fact jail-life has taught me a lot of things. I am now able to comprehend and realize many of the truths which once were rather hazy and vague to me. Moreover, my life has been considerably strengthened and enriched by the new emotional experiences I have here gone through. Some day I shall tell those things to my countrymen. At least I entertain the hope and ambition to do so, should God give me the opportunity and also the necessary gift of expression which I lack.

I do not resent being in jail. On the contrary, I consider it a privilege to have to suffer for the sake of the motherland. Take it from me,—in suffering there is a lot of joy. Otherwise people would run mad, or else how could they laugh so heartily even in the midst of suffering? What looks like suffering from

the outside is found on examination from within to be a source of joy. Of course I cannot maintain this strength of mind all the year round nor even for twenty-four hours of the day, because the fetters have cut into my flesh. Nevertheless, I have not the slightest doubt that unless you are more or less influenced by this kind of feeling, suffering can never enrich your life, nor can you keep your mental balance in the midst of suffering.

My only regret is that I have spent these fourteen months rather uselessly. If I were in a jail in Bengal I could by this time make much progress in my Sadhana, or what I might call my experiments with Truth. But that was not to be. Now, my only prayer is—"Whom Thou makest Thy standard-bearer, give unto him the strength to bear it." Whenever I think of my release, I am overcome more by a sense of fear than of joy. I am afraid, lest the call of duty should come before I am prepared for it. Hence I think the question of release should not arise till I am ready. The call of duty has not come, only because I am not yet inwardly prepared for it. But the day I get ready there will be no power on earth that could keep me confined even for a moment.

All these are my personal feelings. I do not know if there is any objective truth in these feelings. Subjective truth and objective truth merge together in the course of time inside the walls of a jail. Feeling and memory get confused with truth. At least that is what has happened to me, so that feeling is the only reality to me at the present moment.

You have said in your letter that distance of time and space has made me dearer to Bengal. But I can

hardly tell you how this same distance has endowed Bengal with a greater beauty and greater significance in my eyes. The late Desabandhu writing about Bengal's lyrical poetry says, "There is an eternal truth inherent in Bengal's soil and in Bengal's rivers." Would it be possible for me to understand the significance of these words unless I had lived here for a year? The green and wavy cornfields of Bengal, the mango-groves with sweet-smelling blossoms, the evening prayers at incense-burning temples, picturesque little cottages dotting the countryside—how beautiful are all these scenes even in imagination!

In morning and evening when small pieces of white clouds go floating by, I feel like the exiled Yakshā of Meghaduta and am seized with a sudden longing to send through these clouds the inmost wishes of my heart to Mother Bengal. At least I would like to say like a Vaishnava—"I consider it a privilege to court even the worst calumny for Thy sake."

When the sun goes down behind the high walls of the Mandalay Fort, and the western sky is bedecked with the rays of the setting sun, and the small pieces of cloud undergo a magic transformation in colours, I invariably think of the blue sky of Bengal and her glorious scenes at sunset. Who knew beforehand that there was so much beauty in an imaginary scene like this !

When the earliest rays of the sun light up the universe and fall upon my heavy eyelids I am at once reminded of another sunrise, a sunrise in which Bengal's poets and Sadhakas discovered the real picture of Bengal!

Ah, I am afraid I am getting pedantic. In fact, however, this is not pedantry. I am only in a talking mood, that's all. This is what happens to a person when he is deprived of the privilege of exchanging views with others. As an engine has to let off steam from time to time, so do I let myself off in this manner.

I am glad to hear that the Samiti is carrying on its activities properly. There should be no cause for any ill-feeling between yourselves and the Lansdowne Branch. I hope they are also getting on very well with their work. Will you kindly see if you can do something for the Orphanage organized by the South Calcutta Sevasram? I don't think it is working very well though it certainly forms a very important branch of the work.

No, I had not the slightest difficulty in recognizing you. Hope you are all doing well. My affectionate greetings to you all.

* * * * *

2

[Extract from a letter to Sriyut Gopal Lal Sanyal, Editor of the 'Atma Sakti.']

Insein Jail,
April 5, 1927.

Dear friend,

I was glad to receive your letter dated 5th of Chaitra. You have asked me quite a number of questions. I don't know how to answer them. I feel like writing ever so many things, but don't know exactly how to do so.

With regard to my health I have nothing new to add. It is the same as ever. I do not know how it will turn out in the end, but I no longer worry about my health. During these few months my mind has been working along some definite lines. The conviction is steadily growing on me that unless a man is prepared to sacrifice everything that counts in life he will find it difficult to keep his head high. In the very prime of life I had entered my field of activity with the following prayer in my heart—"Whomsoever Thou makest Thy standard-bearer, give unto him the strength to bear it also." I do not know about the future, but up till now God has blessed me with that strength. Hence I am happy beyond measure and sometimes I really think there are not many in this world who are quite as happy as I am. In fact, the further the hope recedes of getting out of these high walls the more am I at peace with myself. There is a great comfort in digging into oneself and in living an inward life, intent on self-development. And when a man is destined to go through a long term of imprisonment the only thing that can sustain his strength is a mind at peace. Hence the prospect of prolonged imprisonment heartens me instead of discouraging me. Emerson says, "We must live wholly from within." This is a great truth, and my faith in that truth is growing stronger day by day.

Circumstanced as I am, it would be ruinous for me if I were to judge the success or failure of my life by external events. The standard by which we prisoners are to be judged is internal rather than external; for, judged by worldly standards our value would appear to be nil. If life comes to an abrupt end here we may

not possibly leave behind us any permanent mark on the material world. But I do think, even if we have failed to achieve anything in life, even if we have failed to give practical shape to our ideals, still we shall feel that we have not lived in vain. If I have sincerely accepted a great ideal in my life, if I have turned my body and soul in accordance with that ideal, if I have merged my whole being into that great ideal—that will give complete satisfaction; and even if my life were a failure from a worldly point of view, to me (and perhaps to my Creator too) it would never seem to be a failure. Everything in this world is short-lived. Only one thing endures and knows no destruction—that thing is an idea or an ideal. Our ideals, our aspirations are indestructible. Is it possible to keep ideas imprisoned within stone walls?

If you are to make supreme sacrifice for an ideal you have to accept that ideal in its fullest. In other words, in order to fully realize an ideal you must be prepared to renounce everything for its sake. Renunciation and realization are the two sides of one and the same thing. Just at this moment I am literally pining for this complete realization on the one hand and supreme renunciation on the other.

The Great God, who in spite of all my weaknesses has aroused in me a sense of infinite strength, will certainly show me even further grace. "Him that God chooses will surely have Him," says the Upanishad. Let me now wait and see.

I have been compelled to give up systematic study for a pretty long time. I had started systematic study and research on some fundamental problems of our national life. For the time being I have had to stop

the work. I do not know when I shall be able to take it up again. I had a mind to finish the work while here, for, once I am out, the work will be postponed indefinitely. Perhaps I have not yet completed the things expected of me in prison and hence the delay in my going out.

* * * * *

May God keep you in good health and may you receive His blessings in all your activities.

JAIL AND CONVICTS

1

[Letters to Sriyut Dilip Kumar Roy.]

Mandalay Jail,
2. 5. 25.

My dear Dilip,

I was glad to receive your letter dated 24. 3. 25. You perhaps apprehended that this time too the letter would pass through what is called "double distillation" as it so often happens. I am, however, glad to tell you that this time it was an exception.

Your letter has so deeply touched my heart and so profoundly influenced my thoughts and feelings that I find it difficult to answer the letter. That the letter would have to pass through the hands of a "censor" is another difficulty; for, nobody would like to have his most intimate thoughts exposed to the full glare of broad daylight. So, all that I have been thinking and feeling at this moment behind the prison bars must remain unsaid till an indefinite future date.

It is quite natural that the continued detention of so many of us without any reason, or for reasons unknown to us, should be shocking to your refined taste and susceptibility. But since we have to bow down to the realities of life we might as well look at the whole thing from a spiritual standpoint. I will not say that I prefer being in jail—that would be sheer hypocrisy. I would rather say that no person with education or refinement will ever like to be in a

jail. The whole atmosphere of a jail is vitiated to an extent which is calculated to turn a man into a beast and I believe this applies to jails everywhere. I think most of the convicts never improve in morals while in jail, rather they deteriorate in every respect. I should say that after having spent so many days in prison I feel alive to the necessity of a thorough overhauling of our jail administration, and in future I am certainly going to take up the work of prison-reform in right earnest. The Indian jail administration is only an imitation of a very bad system (e.g. British) just as the Calcutta University is an imitation of a bad university—I mean the London University. In matters of prison-reform, we would do well to follow in the footsteps of advanced countries like the United States of America.

What is most needed in this kind of reform is the introduction of a new life, or what you might call a new mentality based on genuine sympathy for the convicts. The criminal instinct of convicts should be regarded as a kind of mental disease and treated as such. Vindictive punishment which has been the dominating factor in our jail administration should now give place to reformatory punishment. Unless I was in prison myself I don't think I would have been able to look at the prisoners or convicts with the same sympathy as I do now. I am perfectly certain that our art and literature would be greatly enriched if our artists and literary men had some experiences of prison life. One perhaps does not consider how much Nazrul Islam's poetry owes to his experience of jail life.

When I think calmly about it I feel firmly convinced that behind all our sorrows and sufferings

there is always a higher purpose at work. If this idea pervaded every moment of our lives then there would be no pain whatsoever in our sufferings, and this perpetual clash between the body and the soul would come to an end.

As a rule, a certain philosophic attitude lends courage to the heart of a man undergoing imprisonment. I have practically banked on that, and what little I have studied of philosophy and my general attitude towards life have, indeed, stood me in good stead. If a man has sufficient resources within him he will never suffer even in imprisonment provided, of course, he enjoys perfect health. Unfortunately, our suffering is not simply spiritual but physical as well, and in spite of our best efforts the flesh sometimes gives way.

The late Lokmanya Tilak had written his commentary on the Geeta while in detention, and I can say for certain that he was inwardly happy during those days. But at the same time I am sure the years of prison life he spent in Mandalay Jail was responsible for his premature death.

I must tell you that the enforced solitude in which a man has to live in prison ultimately gives him an opportunity to solve the fundamental problems of life. Speaking for myself, I can tell you that many of the problems of our individual or community life seem to me nearer solution now than they were about a year ago. Such views or opinions as I could express but vaguely at one time have now become clearer in my conception. If not anything else, this solitude alone will help me a good deal from spiritual standpoint by the time I serve out my term.

You have been pleased to call my incarceration a sort of 'Martyrdom.' Of course this reveals your deep feeling for me and also your own greatness of heart. But I think I have a little sense of proportion and humour in me; hence I do not have the impudence to regard myself as a 'Martyr.' I would by all means try to get rid of such impudence and an inflated notion of myself; but how far I have succeeded in doing that my friends alone can say. 'Martyrdom,' therefore, can at best be an ideal to me.

I believe a long-term prisoner always runs the risk of ageing prematurely without his knowing it. One ought to guard against that. You can't really imagine how a man ages slowly both in body and in mind as a result of long imprisonment. Of course various causes contribute to this factor—e.g. bad food, want of exercise and amusement, seclusion from society, the dead weight of bondage, want of friends, and the last, but not the least, absence of music. There are certain needs which man can supply from within, while there are others which must come from without. This deprivation from external objects is, in no small degree, responsible for premature ageing. In the Alipore Jail, there is arrangement for weekly music programmes for the European convicts; but there is no such arrangement for us. Picnics, friendly talks, music, public speeches, open air games, cultivation of poetry and literature according to one's taste—all these things enrich our lives to an extent not ordinarily realized by us. Only when we are in a state of enforced bondage do we properly understand their real value. It is impossible to reform the character of our convicts until arrangements for healthy social life

are made in our jails. So long as the present state of things would continue, our jails are bound to remain centres of corruption, and their moral tone will never improve.

I should not forget to mention that the sympathy and good wishes of one's own people, one's friends, and of the general public can give great relief to a person confined in jail. Although this influence works almost imperceptibly and in a very subtle manner, I have found on analysing my own mind that this influence is, none the less, less real for all that. This is the one great factor that marks all the difference between the fate of an ordinary convict and that of a political prisoner. A political prisoner knows that on his release he will be welcomed back into society; but an ordinary convict finds no comfort that way. Probably he can expect no sympathy from any quarters except from his own people at home. He will feel ashamed to show himself in public. Some of the convicts who have to work in our ward tell me that their own people do not know that they are in jail. They were ashamed to send news to their own homes. The whole matter strikes me as most unfortunate. I do not see why civilized society should not show greater sympathy towards the criminals.

I could go on writing pages and pages regarding my experiences in jail and my mental reactions to the same, but it is not possible to do so within the limited scope of a letter. I might have tried to write a whole book on this subject if I had the energy and capacity to do so; but unfortunately I lack that energy at present.

I would like to say that our sufferings in jail are more mental than physical. Prison life may not be so very painful provided the treatment is not harsh or humiliating. These subtle forms of humiliation of course emanate from the highest quarters; the immediate jail authorities have no hand in the matter. At least that is my idea. Such attempts at repression or humiliation only succeed in vitiating one's mind against those responsible for these, and judging from that standpoint these attempts fail to produce the desired result. Afraid lest we should forget our earthly existence and create within us a state of heavenly bliss, these humiliations are heaped upon us just to rouse us from that blissful forgetfulness to the stark realities of our dismal surroundings.

You have said in your letter that the sad spectacle of human tears has depressed and saddened your heart. But these tears are not wholly the tears of sorrow; they are not unmixed with the tears of love and compassion. Do you think you would be unwilling to negotiate the small waves of sorrow if you had the prospect of ultimately reaching a broad and rich stream of joy? Personally I do not see any reason for despondency and pessimism. I would rather think that sorrows and sufferings would only goad me on to nobler efforts and greater success. Do you really think what we would achieve without suffering would be worth having at all?

I received all the books you sent me some time ago. I can't send them back now, because there are here so many who are anxious to read them. Your selection of books has been excellent. I need hardly

tell you that more of such books would be always welcome.

Yours, etc.

2

Mandalay Jail,
25. 6. 25.

My dear Dilip,

Since I wrote to you last, I have received as many as three letters from you dated the 6th and 15th of May and the 15th of June.

I have also received the last parcel of books sent by you. Turgenev's "Smoke" I did not receive. The parcel was opened in the office, so I have asked the Superintendent to enquire about it. If necessary, he will make enquiries at the C.I.D. office in Calcutta. In the meantime you can write to the D.I.G., C.I.D., in order to draw their attention.

Bertrand Russell's "Prospects of Industrial Civilization" was left behind in the Berhampore Jail with some political prisoners there. When we were transferred, many of them seemed to be anxious to keep the book and one of them was actually reading it. I did not know that you might require it, that's why I left it there. Russell's books are so popular; nobody likes to part with a book if he can get hold of one. I am writing to the Superintendent of the Berhampore Jail asking him to send the book to you. You may write to him too just to expedite the matter. I am sorry to have held up the book when you needed it so badly. But you can understand that I never thought it would put you to so much inconvenience. "Free

Thought and Official Propaganda" is not with me. Did you send that book to me?

I must thank you for kindly selecting the books. We all hope you will get on well with the work you have taken up. I need hardly tell you that I shall read all your writings with great respect. While bringing out a book you must be very particular about its get-up. Just now I came across one of your articles on Rabindranath in a recent issue of the *Bangabani*. I have not yet read it, but the subject seems to be quite fascinating.

You can easily understand what completely absorbs my mind at the present moment. I believe we are all preoccupied with one thought alone, namely the passing away of the great Desabandhu. When I first saw the news in the papers, I could hardly believe my own eyes. But alas! the crash is there. It looks as though the whole nation is cursed.

Although I would very much like to relieve myself of the feelings that overwhelm my heart, I must by all means control myself even though with difficulty. The thoughts that arise in my mind are too sacred and precious to be expressed to strangers—and how can I think of censors except as perfect strangers? I can only say if the loss to the whole country is irreparable, to the youths of Bengal particularly it is a tragedy of the greatest magnitude. In fact, I feel simply stunned by the blow.

Just at this moment I am so much agitated and overwhelmed with grief and, at the same time, inwardly, I feel so near to the departed great that it is not possible for me to write anything by way of analysing his great qualities. When the time will

come I hope to be able to give the world an intimate picture of the great man as I saw him at unguarded moments from very close quarters. Those who, like me, know a good deal about him, dare not speak out to-day. They are afraid lest, unable to give a complete picture of his greatness, they should make him appear smaller than he really was.

I perfectly agree with you when you say in so many words that all sufferings are not necessarily painful. But there are tragedies in life—such as the one that has overtaken us at the present moment—which I could by no means welcome. I do not claim to be either a philosopher or a hypocrite so as to profess that I can gladly welcome all sorts of sorrows and sufferings. At the same time, we have to think of those unfortunate creatures (who knows, they may be really fortunate people too) who seem to be destined by fate to go through all sorts of sufferings and miseries. If, however, anybody has to drink his full share of the cup of misery, he had better do it in a spirit of resignation. This spirit of resignation may not be able, like a Chinese wall, to withstand all the onslaughts of fate, but it will certainly increase our natural power of endurance to a considerable extent. When Bertrand Russell says, there are tragedies in life which men try their utmost to avoid, he certainly voices the sentiment of a perfectly worldly-wise man, and I believe it would take either a perfect sage or a hypocrite, who pretends to be virtuous, to contradict this view.

I don't think you are right in assuming that people who are not idealistic or philosophical in their attitude of mind must be victims of perpetual suffering. Even

the most uninitiated (from abstract point of view, I would call them uninitiated) have some idealism of their own which they love and adore. It is that love of idealism which sustains them in their fight against the various miseries of life. Among those who are suffering imprisonment here along with me, there are many who are neither idealists nor philosophers but who nevertheless go through all their sufferings with great fortitude and courage. They may not be philosophers in the technical sense of the term, but I could by no means think of them as completely devoid of any idealism. Perhaps this applies to all workers all over the world.

There is a general impression that when convicts are led up to the scaffold they are overtaken by a sort of nervous breakdown and that only those who die for a noble cause can face death bravely. This idea is not wholly correct. I have collected some materials on this subject, and I am convinced that in most cases even ordinary convicts face death bravely and before the rope is put around their necks they too lay themselves at the feet of God. We hardly ever hear of a case where a condemned person completely breaks down at the crucial moment. Once a Jail Superintendent told me of a certain convict sentenced to death who had confessed to him that he had actually murdered a person. The Superintendent had asked the convict if he was repentant of his deed. The man said he was not, because he had real grievance against the murdered man. He bravely went up the scaffold and courted death without so much as contracting a single muscle of his body.

A study of the psychology of criminals has opened my eyes, and I think considerable injustice has been done to them. Last time when I was in jail in 1922, a convict used to work as a servant in our ward. I was then living with the great Desabandhu in the same ward and in the same room. The Desabandhu was by nature extremely soft-hearted and he was easily attracted towards this convict. This man was a hardened criminal with eight convictions to his credit. But he, too, seemed to be unconsciously drawn towards the Desabandhu, and ultimately gave a remarkably good account of himself. While leaving jail, Desabandhu asked this man to come straight to him after release and never again to associate with his old comrades. The convict agreed and later proved as good as his word. You will be astonished to hear that the man who was once a hardened criminal has since been living in his house and, in spite of occasional outbursts of ill temper, he is not only a changed man but is actually living a simple and honest life; and he is certainly one of those who have felt the great man's loss most. Most people think that the greatness of a man is to be judged by small isolated events of his life. If that be so, the late Desabandhu would still remain one of our greatest men, even if we leave out of consideration his great services to the country.

I am afraid, I have strayed from my main point, and I had better stop here. I am sorry I could not answer your letter fully, but I have to conclude here if I am to catch to-day's mail. I know you will remain anxious for my news, so I must not miss the mail. More in my next.

Yours, etc.

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND COTTAGE INDUSTRY

1

[Relevant portions from letters written to Sriyut Anil Chandra Biswas, Asst. Secretary, South Calcutta Sevak Samiti]

Mandalay Jail.

Dear friend,

I was glad to receive your letter and news about you all. I know that most of the members of your Executive Committee do not take sufficient interest in the work of the Sevasram. But you need not feel disappointed or worried over that. Most of your Executive Committees are like this. You have to create interest and love of service in others by personally setting examples of service to them. You cannot possibly serve others unless you sincerely feel for them and sympathize with their sufferings. At any rate, it will never be effective enough otherwise. However, I do hope you will make yourselves popular by your public service and that will inspire others with the same spirit of service.

Are there any grounds adjoining the Sevasram buildings that could be utilized for gardening purposes?

I am glad to learn that you collect about Rs. 140/- by way of monthly subscriptions. How much do you pay as house-rent? Is the house a big one? How many rooms are there? What is the number of students in the Corporation Primary School, and what community do they belong to? Please send me a

detailed account of the sort of education you give to the Sevasram boys. Do you keep any servants there? If so, I would like to know how many. Who does the cooking? How many of the boys are actually learning to work at the handloom, and at the sewing machine? How long do you think a boy would take to learn weaving and tailoring?

What do you think of the average intelligence of the boys? Please send me a detailed report of your work in the Sevasram. I shall then see if I can give you any instruction regarding the work. Let me know also the kind of boarding arrangements you have made for the children. What arrangements have you made for medical treatment in case of illness? Do they get medicine or medical help free of cost?

Yours, etc.

2

* * * * *

You must have heard that our hunger-strike was not wholly without effect. Government have been compelled to agree to our demands on the count of religion. Henceforth a detenu from Bengal will be given an allowance of Rs. 30/- per year towards the expenses of the Pujas. Rs. 30/- is a small sum and is not sufficient to meet the expenses. Nevertheless, government have been compelled to accept the principle which they so long refused to recognize. That is our greatest gain. Money in itself is always a petty consideration. Besides the question of worship, government have conceded many other demands made by us. But like a Vaishnava I would still say—"All

this is secondary." The greatest thing about a hunger-strike is purification of the soul and an inner satisfaction—the question of having our demands conceded to has little relation to our inner life, for it belongs to the material world. Without suffering man can never identify himself completely with his ideal, and unless one goes through trials and ordeals one can never measure the infinite strength of one's soul. I have come to know myself better after this experience, and my confidence in myself has increased a hundred-fold.

* * * * *

We must try to introduce cottage industries as part of our social service programme. We would do well to go round the Commercial Museum, Bengal Home Industries Association and similar other institutions. That might give us new ideas and we can also read the Administration Report of the Department of Home Industries much to our profit. Above all, you have to visit some of the centres of cottage industry and try to get first-hand knowledge of things. I don't think we shall require a very large sum of money for starting cottage industry. First of all, we shall need a young man who will devote all his time to this work; he will think about it, keep himself informed, and read all relevant literature on the subject. Then he will personally go and study those of the cottage industries as we can possibly introduce ourselves. And when we have decided upon introducing a particular industry we have to send our workers to get them trained up. I don't see the need of sending anybody to the Polytechnic Institute for regular training. What's the good of learning electroplating or other industries?

We have a tailoring department of our own and it will be no use giving any of our workers training in smithy or electroplating at present. So far as I remember (I had been there only once) of the industries taught in the Polytechnic we can just try to introduce cane-work and clay-modelling. Even so, I am a little bit sceptical about cane-work. I am not quite sure if we can get our women to do this work. Now, if we can decide to take up the work of making earthen dolls we can easily send one of our workers who can learn the art in the course of a few days only. It will require very little money and when we have introduced the industry we shall need only a small sum for buying the necessary paints. Otherwise, it will cost us very little. What is needed, however, is that somebody must devote himself entirely to this task—he must become mad after it.

Another thing strikes me very often. I think I wrote about it previously too—I mean the art of making buttons from oyster-shells. I have seen it followed as a cottage industry in most of the villages of the Dacca District. All members—both male and female—in needy families do this work in the leisure time. You can get one of your workers to learn this within a very short time, or you can secure the services of a new worker who already knows the thing and can give training to others.

You can very well advertise for such a worker in the newspapers. I personally think we can make buttons by rubbing against a stone. We can ourselves do it. We shall only need a fine instrument to make the holes and possibly another sharp one to cut the

things round. The Samiti can just buy a few instruments and get a bag of oyster-shells to give the work a start. At first the work may be confined to needy people only, but once it proves a paying proposition all householders will take up the work to add to their income. The Samiti will supply raw materials at a low cost and arrange for the sale of finished goods at a good rate. Of course, it will require a good deal of time to make preliminary arrangements before you can actually start the work.

3

I received all the papers (Address to Mahatmaji, Programme of the Desabandhu Memorial Fund Meeting, etc.) you sent me previously. Yesterday, I received the Library Catalogue, Programme of the Variety Entertainment, etc., sent by you. I can hardly express my great joy to learn that the Samiti is doing very useful work and is making very quick progress.

I am glad to know you have collected quite a decent sum excluding the expenses incurred.

I perfectly agree with all that you have said with regard to Charkha and spinning. But we cannot afford to give up our efforts at this stage. You told me in your last letter that a certain gentleman was willing to make a gift of eighty bighas of land provided we could arrange for cotton plantation. If we get the land free I think our preliminary expenses for cotton cultivation will not be very great. We may expect very good results within a year if we can only manage to keep one or two garden coolies and pay for the cotton seeds. If the land is a fallow one, we shall need

some money to make it cultivable. We have to consult the Agriculture Department regarding the right kind of seed to be used. Some of the industries which you have started may yield very little profit but you will do well to continue them so long as they do not prove to be losing concerns. Later on when we start more profitable industries we shall discontinue the present ones. At least those who receive regular help from us must needs be given some kind of work to do. When these people will learn to work and give up begging we shall very profitably engage them in useful industries. Even if the present cottage industries are not financially successful we shall still do a great service to society if we can create a love for work in our people, and make them conscious of the dignity of labour. Sriyut Madan Mohan Barman has well-developed ideas about cottage industries. You will do well to see him in this connection.

If you can prepare different kinds of sauces and pickles, I don't see why they should not sell well. Women, and especially widows, can do these things very well. But how to get an expert to give them training? Things must be of very good quality if you want to have a good market. If you think the prospects are good enough it will be well worth making experiments in this line. You can supply raw materials and get ready-made things (marketing the goods, of course, will be your concern) or else people can buy raw materials themselves and sell their finished goods to you. It would be wise to have a talk with the shopkeepers first to see if they can get a good market for us. If the raw materials are good, our things are likely to be good too; but at the same time

chances of dishonest practice will be all the greater. Those who will do this work are naturally poor people and when they will get a quantity of mango, lemon, oil, and pepper at their disposal, who is going to guarantee that they will not use these things for household purposes? On the other hand, if they buy raw materials themselves there is just a chance that they will make use of bad materials (particularly oil). However, you may decide for yourself after considering the pros and cons of the matter. Then again, you have got to know what actual demand there is for such things in the market. I personally think that unless we get extremely conscientious people, there will be little chance of our succeeding in the work. You may try to carry on the work with the help of poor middle-class families. As soon as you get the finished goods you must immediately pay the price, or the wages, as the case may be, and then arrange to keep the goods in our stores until they are disposed of.

The Samiti ought to take up another very important work. There are two jails in Calcutta—the Presidency Jail and the Alipur Central Jail. When a Hindu convict dies in the jail hospital, and it so happens that he has no relative in Calcutta, his dead body is never cremated properly. The body is somehow disposed of through scavengers on payment of some money. But the Moslems have their Burial Association, and when a Moslem convict dies, they arrange for his burial immediately on receipt of news. There should be a similar organization for the Hindu convicts. Will it be possible for the Sevak Samiti to take up this work? If you are agreeable, you might ask Basanta Babu to write to the Jail Superintendent

saying that the Sevak Samiti was willing to take up the work. If you fail to arrange for this immediately you may leave it to me. I shall do it when I am out. I have taken part in cremation on many an occasion whenever a helping hand was needed. So I am always ready to volunteer myself for work of this kind.

* * * * *

If you are really serious about cottage industry you have to do one thing. A suitable young man ought to be sent for training to the Cossimbazar Polytechnic Institute or some other institution of that type. Clay-modelling and images of gods and goddesses are very beautifully done at the Cossimbazar Institute. If you can introduce those industries among those who receive help from us, you will see that things prepared by them will be sold all over Bengal, particularly during festivals and in annual fairs. Another industry quite popular in our country is the making of flowers, bouquets, flower plants and Chinese lanterns with coloured paper. The things are so beautifully made that it is difficult to imagine that they are made of paper. Even children of middle-class families can make these things, and quite nicely too.

Dacca buttons are a product of cottage industry. Many people have the impression that buttons are made in factories at Dacca, but in fact they are not. Women make these things at village homes during leisure time, even in between cooking. That's why we get these things so cheap. I would ask you to consider the possibility of introducing this industry in Calcutta. It may be necessary to send somebody to Dacca just to see how it is being done in the villages.

It would be very nice indeed if you could arrange for Health lectures illustrated by lantern slides in the Bhowanipore area. These lectures are mainly needed in the Bustees of the poor people. If possible, you may try to buy a magic lantern and necessary slides for the purpose. Health lectures become effective only when they are illustrated by slides. It would be even better if instead of buying the slides you could get them made by a local artist.

4

[Extracts from a letter written to Sriyut Hari Charan Bagchi, a worker of the South Calcutta Sevak Samiti]

Mandalay Jail,

3. 7. 25.

I received all the three letters you wrote to me; but could not answer any of them. Besides, I am not keeping good health. I don't feel like doing anything (not even systematic studies). Previously, I could write two letters per week, now I can write only one. So letters go on piling up for two or three months before I get an opportunity to send replies to them.

The main aim of social service should be to get poor people to work by giving them pecuniary help. Charity for charity's sake should never be the object of organized charity. Poor people who receive assistance should be taught to feel that unless help is repaid in some form or other it is degrading to one's self-respect. Hence, if somebody refuses to work in return for the help he receives, that help should be forthwith withheld. Of course, one or two things should be taken into consideration in this connection :

(1) It has to be seen if a person receiving help has sufficient leisure to work. Supposing, for example, a widow receives help but she hardly gets any leisure after her household duties; in that case, she should not be compelled to do additional work. We have only to see that those who receive help do not waste their time in idleness. We may guard against it by arranging for inspection or local enquiry. We should by no means encourage idleness by helping people who refuse to work in spite of being able-bodied and having sufficient leisure at their disposal.

(2) There need not be any insistence on work where a man is physically incapable and where there is no other able-bodied person in the family.

(3) If you want people to work you have to give them variety of choice, for you do not expect all people to do the same kind of work. To start with, you have to give them simple jobs, say, making paper-bags with old newspaper. More difficult jobs will come later on.

(4) There must be arrangement for giving training to those who are to work. People at first fight shy of many jobs. They will simply refuse to do a thing because they do not know how to do it. But once they learn the thing they will do it earnestly and well.

We have been reduced to a nation of beggars, and this mentality is not going to change in a day. If you think you can change it in a day, you are bound to be disappointed. One thing needed in social service is—immense patience.

To sum up, your programme of work would be like this—you will supply raw materials (e.g. old

newspaper, cotton, oyster-shells). Recipients of help will prepare goods out of the raw materials in return for the help they receive. Now it will be your duty to arrange for the sale of these goods. You may make arrangements with a few shopkeepers who will buy your goods. The net profit from these sale proceeds may (at least partially) cover the amount you spend in charities. You need an independent source of income, for, you cannot depend on public charity for all times.

Instead of buying books for the library you may just approach authors and other gentlemen for copies of books.

Ask Anil Babu not to collect books haphazardly for the library. He should follow a definite method regarding the collection of books. Of course, books received free of cost should be accepted by all means. Still there should be a method in it. Your first care should be to collect well-known books in Bengali, English, and continental literature. Next in importance come books on history—history of India, England, and all countries of the world in separate volumes. Then you may collect books on science and biographies of great men. Books on Economics and Politics, Agriculture and Commerce are also to be collected. It would be excellent if you could collect books of all kinds at a time. At any rate, try to get at least some books on all subjects so that people of all tastes and aptitudes may have something to read. You need not keep worthless novels—of course well-known novels must be there. Let us have an ideal library, though on a small scale.

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If you are to buy yarn from some distant markets you can't possibly maintain your weaving department for long. Those who receive help from the Samiti and those who are members themselves should try to grow cotton in their homes. Unless you can grow some cotton at Bhowanipore or its neighbourhood, all your labours will go in vain. There is one thing to be borne in mind. If you can get local people to produce yarn it will mean that local people have got sympathy for the institution. No institution can thrive without local sympathy.

Among local people you will find many who will spin but won't sell the yarn. If you can make *Dhotis* or *Saris* out of their yarn they may feel encouraged to spin. Formerly, many people used to come to the Samiti to get *Dhotis* and *Saris* made out of their yarn. I do not know what it is like at present. Anyway, I think the Samiti should arrange for making *Dhotis* and *Saris* for those who would offer yarn. Also see that the members produce yarn at their own homes.

Yours, etc.

5

What you have said is quite true—genuine workers are rare indeed. But then, you have got to work with the sort of material you have at your disposal. Life begets life, love begets love,—likewise you can make men in the real sense of the term only when you are one yourself.

Political life is getting much too corrupted day by day and it looks as though, for some time to come, politics will not do much good to the country. When

the ideals of truth and sacrifice make their exit from the field of politics, the latter loses much of its effectiveness. A political movement is like the water of a river, at times clean, and at others muddy. It happens like that in every country. You need not take any notice of the political situation in Bengal. Carry on your work of service unperturbed by and regardless of what is happening around.

* * * * *

I do not know if you can yourself account for the present restless state of your mind; but I know what it is due to. Complete self-development is not possible through work and service alone. Along with outward activity one needs intensive study and deep meditation too. Work checks indiscipline and controls the external behaviour of man, while study and meditation give him an internal discipline. External discipline is likely to wear out in the absence of internal discipline. As regular exercise improves your physique, so by deep meditation you can cultivate chaste feelings and conquer your passions. Meditation serves a twofold purpose :—(1) Conquest of the passions—mainly sexual passion, fear, and selfishness. (2) Development of the virtues of love, veneration, sacrifice, wisdom, etc.

The best way to conquer sexual passion is to look upon every woman as Mother, to attribute motherly virtues to her, and to contemplate God in the image of woman (i.e. Durga, Kali). If you can think of God in the image of woman you will gradually learn to discover divinity in every woman, and when you have reached that stage, you will have conquered sex completely. That explains our ancestors' conception

of Divine Power in the form of woman. To look upon every woman as Mother in everyday life is sure to purify one's mind.

Love and veneration can cure the selfish propensities of man. A man would get rid of selfishness to the extent he got attached to a person or an ideal. He can by his own efforts increase his love and attachment and thereby cure himself of selfishness. Love broadens one's mind until it breaks through all narrow limits and merges itself in the wider world. Hence is the necessity of love and veneration and steadfast meditation of some idea or ideal. A man is shaped by his own thoughts. If you think you are weak and sinful, you are sure to become a weakling in time; on the other hand, if you consistently think you are strong and pure, strength and purity will be yours as a matter of right. You are what your thoughts are.

The best way to conquer fear is to follow the Power cult. The images of Durga and Kali are the embodiments of Power. Contemplate Power in some form or other, pray for power, and sacrifice all your weaknesses and failings at the altar of that Power. That will help you to attain strength. Infinite possibilities lie dormant in us. Power has to be awakened. The purpose of worship is to awaken a sense of power within us. Make it a point to pray for Power everyday, and sacrifice your passions at the feet of Divinity. Panchapradip (the five lights) stands for the five senses. We worship Mother with the help of these five senses. Sacrifice means the sacrifice of passions—the goat only symbolizes the passions.

Sadhana or meditation has a twofold purpose—to conquer passions on the one hand and to cultivate chaste habits on the other. When you have conquered the passions your heart will be at once filled with a divine feeling and once that feeling finds a place in your heart, all weaknesses will melt away.

Devote some time to meditation everyday, both in the morning and in the evening. Meditation will give you strength and peace of mind at the same time.

In the meantime you may read the following books of Swami Vivekananda. Among his books you will find 'Patravali' (Letters) and his speeches extremely instructive. Most probably you will get these things in the book entitled 'Bharate Vivekananda'. Separate volumes too may be available. It is not advisable to go through his other books before reading the Letters and the Speeches. It will be unwise to start with books like 'Philosophy of Religion', 'Jnanayoga', etc. Along with his books you might read also 'Sri Sri Ramkrishna Kathamrita'. And then, you will get a good deal of inspiration from many of Rabi Babu's poems. Among D. L. Roy's books there are some (e.g. 'Mewar Patan', 'Durgadas') which can tone you up. The historical novels of Bankim Babu and Rames Datta are certainly very instructive. Nabin Sen's 'Palasir Yuddha' is well worth reading. 'Sikher Balidan' (probably written by Sm. Kumudini Basu) is quite a good book. Read too Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables' (you may get the book in your Library). You will find it very instructive. I cannot send you more

names off-hand. I shall send you a more comprehensive list when I get sufficient time to think over it.

Yours, etc.

6

Mandalay Jail.

You need some daily exercise to keep yourself physically fit. This will do you great good. You will do well to get hold of a copy of Muller's 'My System', and try to follow his system of exercise. The system itself has done me much good. It has some advantages of its own, e.g. (1) It does not cost you anything but buys everything. It requires very little space to take the exercise. (2) It does not involve excessive strain and hence does not produce any adverse effect. (3) It exercises all the muscles of the body and not merely particular limbs. (4) It increases your digestive power.

I think it would do us a lot of good if Muller's system was widely introduced in our country—particularly among the students.

A man ought not to be satisfied with merely doing his daily duties as a matter of routine. It would not do to forget that the real purpose of all work is self-development. Work is not an end in itself, it is only a means to an end which is nothing but a complete and all-round development of life and character. Of course a man has to specialize in a certain direction according to his individual characteristics and aptitude; but that specialization must have a full development as its basis. Without that comprehensive culture one never can feel happy at heart. There will always be a void and emptiness in his heart. For an

all-round development you need, (1) Physical exercise, (2) Systematic studies, (3) Meditation. Sometimes we may have to neglect these things owing to pressure of work, or lack of time. But as soon as the pressure is relieved we ought to pay proper attention to these vitally important things. Mere routine work of the day is not enough; we must find time for exercise and studies and meditation too. It will do one great good if one can devote at least an hour and a half, or two hours, to these most important things. According to Muller, only fifteen minutes' exercise everyday would be sufficient for a person. And then we should devote another fifteen minutes to meditation in solitude. That makes half an hour in all. Add to that an hour to be devoted to studies (I don't mean reading newspapers, time for that must be kept apart)—so in all, you require an hour and a half during the whole day. This one and a half hours should be the minimum you can devote to these things. There is no harm in devoting more time,—if more is possible better still. Everybody must find this time according as it suits his convenience. I think I wrote something about worship and meditation in my last letter. It is no use repeating it here. I am giving you a list of books. I give the names of only such books as you will find in your Samiti Library. Other books I shall name later on.

(a) *On Religion.*

(1) Sri Sri Ramkrishna Kathamrita; (2) Brahmacharya—Surendra Bhattacharya; Do.—Rames Chakravarti; Do.—Phakir Chandra De; (3) Swami-Sisya Sanbad—Sarat Chakravarti; (4) Patravali—Vivekananda; (5) Prachya O Paschatya—

Ibid; (6) Baktritavali—Ibid; (7) Bhabbar Katha—Ibid; (8) Bharater Sadhana—Swami Prajnananda; (9) Chicago Baktrita—Swami Vivekananda.

(b) *Literature, Poetry, History, etc.*

(1) Desbandhu's Works (Basumati edition); (2) Banglar Rup—Girija Sankar Ray Chaudhuri; (3) Bankim's Works; (4) Kurukshetra, Prabhas, Raibatak, and Palasir Yuddha; (5) Jogendra Granthabali (Basumati edition); (6) Katha O Kahini, Chayanika, Gitanjali, Ghare Baire, Gora by Rabindranath; (7) Samajik Prabandha and Paribarik Prabandha by Bhudev Babu; (8) D. L. Roy's Durgadas, Mewar Patan, Rana Pratap; (9) Chhatrapati Sivaji by Satya Charan Sastri; (10) Sikher Balidan—Kumudini Basu; (11) Sekal O Ekal by Rajnarayan Basu; (12) Satyen Dutt's Kuhu O Keka (Book of Poems); (13) Maharshi Devendranath's Autobiography; (14) Rajasthan (Basumati edition); (15) Nabya Japan—Manmatha Ghose; (16) Sipahi Yuddher Itihas—Rajanikanta Gupta; (17) Nirbasiter Atmakatha and other books by Upen Babu; (18) Colonel Sures Biswas—Upendra Krishna Banerji. Besides, you will find many short biographies of great Indians in the three-anna series meant for children.

This list is big enough. It will give you food for studies for at least a year. Now let me tell you something about elementary education.

There is one great difference between Primary Education and Higher Education, in that the former is mainly concerned with teaching new facts to the young learners. Higher education teaches new facts

and at the same time develops the reasoning faculty too. Primary education depends mostly on the training of the senses, because at that stage the powers of thinking and memorizing are not fully developed. Hence you find it difficult to give the child an idea of things like the cow, the horse, the flower, the fruit unless you place them before his eyes. But in higher education you can teach a student about things which he has never seen with his eyes, but which he can comprehend with the help of his thinking faculty. It has to be noted that the more you take the help of the senses the easier it is to teach things. Suppose, for example, you want to give a child an idea of a flute, or some other musical instrument; you can do it very easily by letting the child see the object with his eyes, touch it with his hands, and hear the sound with his ears by playing on it. He quickly forms an idea because he has used the senses of sight, touch and hearing all at the same time. You must have noticed that a tiny child immediately on seeing a thing wants to touch it and put it into his mouth. It is because the child wants to understand material objects with the help of all his senses. We would, therefore, do well to follow this law of nature and try to impart knowledge through the senses. In teaching Arithmetic much the quicker process would be to teach addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with the help of cowries, marbles or small pieces of stones.

Another thing to be borne in mind is that we should not rest content with simply imparting academic education, we must arrange for giving

training in various arts and crafts too. Clay-modelling, making of maps with clay, drawing, painting, dyeing, and a little bit of music—all these have to be arranged for. This will not only make for a more liberal and comprehensive kind of education but will help the academic side as well. If you can get children interested in a varied number of subjects their minds will become more alert and keen and sharp. They will pay greater attention to their studies and will never be scared away by them. If instead of receiving training in useful things a child is simply taught to learn by cramming, he will never find interest in his studies and will gradually fight shy of books. His common sense will not then develop as it ordinarily should. If, however, we allow a child to know and enjoy things with the help of his eyes, ears, hands, tongue and nose, his senses will become more alert and his intelligence sharp. He will find greater relish in his studies for the little practical knowledge he has thus gained. A system of education without manual training is basically wrong. Nothing in the world can compare with the pleasure one gets from making things with one's own hands. There is great joy in all acts of creation. Children get taste of that whenever they produce anything with their own hands. They feel elated whenever they get an opportunity of doing things for themselves either by planting trees in the garden or by making dolls out of clay. We should by all means make arrangements for providing this kind of joy for our children. This will help the growth of originality and individuality among children. In England, almost all primary school children learn gardening, clay-modelling and music. Besides, they take

exercise and drill, play in between study periods, and parade the streets in a body in a sort of route march. They are told about different lands and peoples in the form of stories. The best way to teach is to do so by telling stories, so that the children do not feel that they are having a mechanical lesson. It will be more in the nature of games. Textbooks are not at all necessary in the initial stages. When you are going to give them a lesson on plants and flowers you must have plants and flowers in front of the children. When you are teaching about the stars and planets you must do so right under the open sky. Whatever you may teach, the thing must be well within the grasp of all their sense organs. A geography lesson must always be done with the help of maps and globes; and when you are teaching history, children should be taken round to museums and other places of interest. Music, painting, drawing, gardening, etc., must be taught, even if on a very moderate scale. Otherwise the purpose of primary education will be completely defeated. What is wanted is a practical knowledge of things. Simply learning things by rote will be of no use.

I have briefly given you my ideas about the principles of primary education. I purposely did not raise the question of textbooks. Textbooks, by themselves, are of very little importance. The success of the system depends very largely on good teachers. The teacher has, first of all, to understand the fundamental principles of primary education. Then he can easily evolve his own method of teaching. With genuine love and sympathy for children the teacher has to look at everything from

the standpoint of his students. Unless the teacher can place himself in the position of the taught, how can he possibly understand their difficulties and errors? Hence the most important factor is the personality of the teacher. The three fundamental requisites of education are :—(1) Personality of the teacher, (2) Method of teaching, (3) Selection of subjects and textbooks. No education worth the name is possible unless the teacher possesses the required personality. We need have no worries about textbooks, or even the method of teaching, provided we get the right kind of persons—men of character and personality—as teachers.

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Hope you are all doing well.

Yours, etc.

7

Mandalay Jail,

6. 2. 26.

I received your letter in time. Please don't mind the delay in sending the reply. I hope you will remove all worries from your mind and go on doing your duties cheerfully. Milton says, "The mind is its own place and can make a hell of heaven and a heaven of hell." Of course it is not always possible to put it into practice; nevertheless, you cannot get on in life unless you keep an ideal before your eyes. You must not forget that life has its worries and at no stage it is free from troubles.

I have absolutely stopped thinking about my release, and I don't see why you should be worried at

all. Through God's grace I am perfectly at peace with myself. If He so wills I may spend my whole life here. I really feel equal to such an eventuality.

My good wishes are of little avail; but I do pray to God so that His blessings may protect you from all harms. I have nothing more to say—only have faith in God. He will keep you from all harms and temptations. You cannot be happy under any circumstances (even if you are free from earthly wants) unless you have known perfect peace of mind. Hence, while doing your worldly duties you must be always prepared to resign yourself completely to the will of God.

Yours, etc.

PARTY FACTIONS AND BENGAL'S FUTURE

[Letter to Sriyut Bhupendranath Banerjea, Asstt. Secretary, South Calcutta Tarun Samity and Headmaster, South Calcutta Chittaranjan National School.]

Mandalay Jail.

My dear friend,

I was glad to receive your letter dated 2. 5. 26. I hope you won't mind the delay in sending the reply. You can easily understand that in many respects I am not my own master now. I was at once glad, and sorry too, to receive all the news about Bhowanipore from your letter. The whole of Bengal to-day is torn by factions and quarrels, and the less the work being done at a particular place, the more serious is the quarrel raging there. Some real work is being done at Bhowanipore; hence it is comparatively free from party factions and quarrels. Still what little there is, it is enough to cause pain to a non-party man. I simply wonder, while there are so many people to quarrel, why should we not get a single person in the whole of Bengal who could bring them together and compose their differences? Due to this party spirit Bengal has lost a patriotic worker like Syt. Anilbaran Ray, and who knows how many more they are going to lose? Bengal is blind, she has sunk low in quarrels and cliques, and does not know where she stands. We no longer hear of the great need for selfless renunciation. The great soul who had given himself so completely and so unreservedly has just passed away into the great void. Like a flame of fire the

very spirit of renunciation took human form so to say and revealed itself before the eyes of Bengal's men and women, and under that divine light Bengal for a moment got a glimpse of heaven itself. But as soon as the light went out, Bengal degenerated again into her old selfish ways of life. There is a disgraceful scramble for power everywhere in Bengal. If one has power, one is anxious to retain it, and if one has not, one is determined to grab it. Both the parties say, "If the country is to be freed at all, let it be done by me alone. If not, then it is none of my concern." Are there no workers in Bengal to-day who can silently sacrifice themselves without taking notice of the recriminations of our power-loving politicians?

I know there are workers who even sacrificed their own intellectual and spiritual pursuits in order to devote themselves entirely to the service of the people. These people are sure to feel shocked to find everybody quarrelling over the pettiest of things, and will it be a wonder if they ultimately leave the political field in disgust? On the other hand, I am afraid, if these persons who gave up their intellectual and spiritual aspirations for a life of public service may not themselves be swamped by those quarrels and factions. Then again, how could you blame them if disappointed in their hopes of serving the people rightly they revert to their spiritual life? I can very clearly see, if the present state of things continue for sometime more, many of our selfless workers will be compelled to take the same course as Anilbaran did.

In most of the workers of Bengal I have noticed a sort of worldly wisdom and a bargaining spirit slowly

growing up. They have started saying, "Give me power—give me office—at least give me a seat on the executive committee—otherwise I don't work." I feel like asking, from when did public service become a business deal, or a matter of contract? To me the ideal of service has always been—"Give, and only give, and never ask for any return."

It will be no wonder if Bengalees have forgotten this message of Vivekananda when they have so soon managed to forget the great example of the Desabandhu's renunciation.

It is a shame, it is a disgrace, it breaks my heart to think of it. But I find no way out, I am helpless, and sometimes I feel I shall stop writing to anybody and cut off all connections with the outside world. If possible, we shall atone for this sin on behalf of our countrymen by sacrificing ourselves inch by inch away from the common people's gaze. And then, if there be God above us, if truth be firmly established in the world, we hope some day our countrymen will come to understand what we have felt and what we have done. We never could think that we would see such a farce being enacted in the country. We could never imagine we would witness the astonishing spectacle of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning.

I think, I have let myself go in a rather sentimental mood. I really could not suppress my emotions. It is because I consider you to be one of those very few in whom I can confide. You are engaged in constructive work. Let me hope you will not get into the quagmire of party factions. I was very glad to read about the school. Of course I am sorry to hear about the school building. As a

matter of fact, I had foreseen this difficulty, and several years ago I had told Chandi Babu and others that things would come to such a pass. I had always thought that the school authorities had taken lease of the plot in a most unbusiness-like manner. It was unwise to start building the house there, and now the landlord himself has profited by it. I am glad you have started making collections for the building fund without giving way to despair. I am sure you will succeed in your efforts, for, "One who does good to others will never come to grief."

I am glad to receive all the news about your Samiti. It would be very nice indeed, if you could start a school for the children of scavengers, cobblers and other so-called depressed classes. You can very well consult Amrita about this matter. I received a letter from him quite a long time ago. I am sorry I could not send him a reply. I am writing to Kulada to-day. I think I shall be able to write to Amrita next week.

If I were there, I am sure, I would never allow that split to occur. I would certainly assist you in opening separate branches, but I would by no means allow you to start altogether new institutions under new names. However, it can't be helped now. What has been, is for the best—that is how you should look at it and get on with the work. I think you have done well in framing a constitution for the Samiti.

I hope you won't come to friction over making collections of rice and money with the Balak Samiti. If too many Samitis start collecting these things in one particular area, the householders may feel over-taxed. You will do well to see to that.

I think if you could get one or two of your teachers trained at the Cossimbazar Polytechnic Institute, it would very greatly help the technical section of your school. I had once been to the Cossimbazar School. It struck me as a very useful institution indeed. They teach a few things which are not taught elsewhere, e.g. clay-modelling, smithy, tailoring, electroplating, etc. When I had been there, their machinery for electroplating was just arriving.

I am sorry to learn that your Health and Sanitation Section has not been working well. It is because you have not approached the public in the right manner. If your approach had been in the proper spirit people would surely have responded to your call. Our main idea should be to create a love of work in them, and in order to induce them to work we must win them over by our love and sympathy for them. It must be borne in mind that the purpose of a Health and Sanitation Department is different from that of a charitable dispensary.

You are not aware, perhaps, that I am mainly responsible for the shortcomings of the South Calcutta Sevasram. I was suddenly arrested before I could organize it properly. When the Sevasram was located in Kalighat area I used to pay the house rent and also the salary of the assistant secretary from my personal funds. Only the expenses for the children's maintenance were met from public subscriptions. I have a clear conscience with regard to the Sevasram, for not a single pie of the public funds has ever been misused by me. Ever since my arrest my elder brother (Sarat Babu) has been paying the amount so long contributed by me. Of late, the expenses have gone

down and the income shows an increase; hence he is not required to pay quite as much as we used to before. When I was spending Rs. 200/- per month for the Sevasram my friends used to say that I was simply wasting my money for the sake of half a dozen boys only and that the money could be better utilized in other ways. But how could I make them understand that I did not take up the work of the Sevasram only to satisfy a temporary whim of mine? I took up the work with a view to relieving myself of a great pain which had been smouldering within me for the last thirteen or fourteen years. I may even give up my Congress activities, but it is impossible for me to give up the work of the Sevasram. Where else can I have a greater opportunity of serving the suffering humanity? Some day I shall tell you the long history behind this Sevasram—why and when the idea took possession of my mind and how at length I left the field of idle theorizing, and entered the practical field of work and service. If I were to say all that in a letter, it would make a volume by itself.

I have already said a good deal. Let me conclude here. You have asked for my news; what am I to say? One of Rabindranath's poems has a great appeal for me. Would it be impudent on my part to give answer in the poet's language? Poets are dear to us because they can express our feelings in clearer and more direct terms. Let me say with the poet—

I am still exploring the realms of fancy,
In silent meditation I spend my days.
And away from human society
I listen day and night
To the still sad music of my soul.

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HINDU-MUSLIM PACT

[Extract from a letter dealing with the Hindu-Muslim Pact and its future.]

Mandalay Jail.

I have read your statement and the counter-statement issued by Syt. Sengupta. Up till now I have not seen any reply to Sengupta's statement. The question of reviving the Pact does not arise at all. When the Pact was adopted at the last Serajgunj Conference there was even then a section opposed to it, and although their opposition was not vocal the Desabandhu was perfectly aware of it. Not only privately but publicly too, the Desabandhu had repeatedly said that his object was to establish a solid foundation on which to unite the two great communities.

Hence he would have no objection to altering portions or clauses here and there if they were considered unacceptable or calculated to defeat the purpose of the Pact. So far as I remember, at the Coconada Congress he went so far as to say that it was not his intention to press for immediate acceptance of the Bengal Pact by the Congress. All that he wanted was that the Pact be considered by the A.I.C.C.

But the whole Congress was then bitterly opposed to it, and the Congress members even refused to consider the Pact. After the Congress session at Coconada, the Pact was adopted at the Serajgunj Conference. I was not present there; but even before

the Pact was adopted the Desabandhu had given this assurance to all that he was not unwilling to listen to arguments or new terms for settlement. On the contrary, he was prepared to make necessary alterations in the clauses and provisions of the Pact.

Hence I think it would not be inconsistent on the part of even ardent followers of the Desabandhu to claim the right to make alterations in the Pact. At the same time I should say that it would be no use simply swearing by the Desabandhu since he is now dead, to keep hanging at the door of the A.I.C.C. with folded hands for a settlement of the problems of Bengal. Even if the Hindu-Muslim question be solved on an all-India basis, Bengal's peculiar problems must be solved by the Bengalees themselves.

Of late, I have come to form some very definite ideas about things after having followed the trend of events so far as it was possible to do from newspaper reports. At this very critical hour what we need most is a clear and long-range view of things.

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Yours, etc.

ON THE QUESTION OF HIS RELEASE

[Letter to his elder brother Sriyut Sarat Chandra Bose.]

Insein Central Jail,

April 4, 1927.

My dear Dada,

You must be very anxious to have my reactions to Mr. Moberley's proposals, and I think it is time I gave my views regarding the same. I do not know how far you will see eye to eye with me; nevertheless I am giving below my views for all that they are worth.

I have gone through Mr. Moberley's proposals several times over and have very carefully weighed each word and expression he has used therein. It must be admitted that he has been extremely careful in the use of his language. I am now going to give you my personal opinion which I formed after having very calmly considered the proposals from all stand-points. It was by no means hastily done under a sudden impulse. What I am writing to you now is the result of a very deep thinking. Nevertheless, if there be any error of judgment on my part and in case there are gaps in my line of reasoning I shall certainly stand corrected, and shall agree to reconsider the position.

Let me say at the outset that I very greatly admire Mr. Moberley's outspokenness, and I think I shall fail in my duty unless I too express my views as frankly as he has done. I have always believed in outspokenness and I think a free and frank discussion will be ultimately most helpful to both the parties.

I must thank Mr. Moberley for some of the things he has said, particularly when he says he does not demand any confession from me regarding my past activities or my future programme of work, that he is prepared to rely on my word of honour and release me forthwith, and towards the end, when he says he did not place the proposals before me at first, for, that might lend itself to the interpretation that pressure was being brought upon me for acceptance of the proposals. All these things go to prove that he has shown me considerable honour as a person possessing a sense of self-respect, and although for reasons given below I cannot agree to his proposals I very greatly appreciate the honourable sentiments expressed therein. Finally, as a member of the Bengal Legislative Council I cannot help admiring the Hon. Member for the way he proceeded with the matter, for, I think, this is the first instance when the Members of the Council were taken into confidence and a certain proposal was placed in the first instance before them for consideration.

I think, I have nothing more to say in favour of Mr. Moberley's proposals.

At the outset, I would like to rid your mind of one idea—my opinions have nothing to do with the publication of Chhotadada's (Dr. Sunil Chandra Bose's) report, for he never consulted me regarding his recommendations either before or after preparing his report. If I were told before, I would certainly have expressed myself against the proposal of sending me to Switzerland.

When he let me know of it, after he had sent forward this proposal, I at once suspected that it might

lead to unfortunate consequences, and later events have only confirmed my suspicions. Of course, Chhotadada came down only in his capacity as a physician to examine me and in expressing his opinion as such. I think he has only acted as a neutral physician and a scientist of experience. It was certainly none of his concern to consider what political interpretation might be put upon it or what diplomatic use might be made of his recommendations. Hence I cannot find fault with his action. Some of his patients who were sent to a Swiss Sanatorium completely recovered from their maladies. That must have led him to make similar recommendations for me too, as he usually does in the case of patients suffering from Phthisis. This is indeed the best recommendation for rich patients who have the means to go to Switzerland and undergo treatment there. Thus it will be clear that I have put myself under no obligation to accept any particular proposal.

It is evident, Government have not accepted the report of my illness as submitted by Chhotadada, but they accept his suggestions for improvement of my health. Mr. Moberley has clearly stated, "It will be clear to everybody that Subhas Chandra is not very seriously ill and he has not been completely invalidated." I feel curious to know when Government will consider me as "very seriously ill" and "completely invalidated." Will it be when all doctors will declare my case as hopeless and that I may die in the course of a few months? Besides, if they refuse to accept Chhotadada's report on my illness why are they so anxious to accept what incidentally are his suggestions? And then Chhotadada certainly did not

suggest that I should not be allowed to go home or see my relatives before I leave the country. He did not say either that the ship in which I would sail must not touch at any Indian port, nor did he suggest that even if I regained my health I could not return to my country so long as the Ordinance was in force. From all these things I have reasons to suspect that Government's real intentions are not to help me to regain my health.

In fact, Mr. Moberley says there are only two ways open to me, namely, (i) to remain in jail as a prisoner, or (ii) to go abroad to recoup my health and stay there for an indefinite period.

Does he really think there is no *via media* between these two? At least I don't think so. It is Government's desire that I remain a prisoner until the Ordinance expires, that is, till January 1930. But who can say that the Ordinance will not be re-introduced after 1930? Last October I had a talk on this subject with Mr. Lowman, the chief of the C.I.D. Police. What I gathered from him was not at all hopeful and I shall not be in the least surprised if a move is made in 1929 to put the Ordinance permanently on the statute book. In that case, I shall have to live permanently as an exile in a foreign land and I shall consider myself responsible for my banishment. If Government's intentions were clear in that matter it could be definitely stated in the proposal as to when I should be able to return to my country.

Besides, I have received no assurance as to the kind of freedom I shall be able to enjoy abroad. Will the Government of India give me protection against the swarms of C.I.D. people who constantly move

about in Switzerland? It cannot be denied that I am a political suspect, and so long as I do not change my political complexion and become a police spy myself, Government will continue to regard me with suspicion, and it is more than probable that these spies will make my life miserable by dogging me at every step.

In Switzerland there are not only British spies but also Swiss, Italian, French, German, and Indian spies appointed by the British Government, and what proof is there that some of these over-zealous spies will not submit false reports in order to paint me in the blackest of colours in the eyes of Government? Last year, I told Mr. Lowman that the Intelligence Department could, if they so willed, get anybody arrested under the Ordinance by bringing false charges against him. It is even easier to do so from Europe. It is common knowledge how people who were regarded with suspicion in foreign lands found it extremely difficult to come back to India. Even a leader of eminence like Lala Lajpat Rai could not possibly return to this country were it not for the interest taken in his case by some prominent members of the Parliament and of the British Cabinet. Since Government has once started suspecting me I can very well imagine what my future position is going to be.

I know that Police spies are a little bit over-zealous in these matters. However quietly and guardedly I might live in Europe, they are sure to send prejudicial reports to the Government of India, and although I choose to lead a very peaceful life they will represent me as an arch-conspirator while I shall be perfectly in the dark as to the kind of report they will be sending against me. There will be no chance of

real facts ever coming to light nor shall I have any opportunity to represent my own case. In this way, it is quite probable that before the year 1929 I shall be proved beyond all doubts to be a prominent Bolshevik leader with the result that chances of my returning to India will vanish for ever; for if the people of Europe are afraid of anything to-day it is certainly Bolshevism. It is for these reasons that I am unwilling to go into a self-imposed exile from my motherland. Government will be able to appreciate my feelings if they look at it from my standpoint.

If I had the intention to become a Bolshevik agent I would have started for Europe as soon as the suggestion came from Government—if possible by the first boat available. After regaining my health there, I would join the Bolshevik party and move about from Paris to Leningrad in an attempt to stir up a mighty revolution all over the world. I have, however, no such intention or end in view. When I heard that I would not be allowed to return to India, Burma, and Ceylon, I thought within myself if I were really such a serious menace to British administration in India that they cannot rest satisfied with merely banishing me from Bengal; and I wondered if the whole thing was not a huge hoax after all. If the first view is correct then I have reasons to feel proud that I constitute such a great menace to the Bureaucracy. But the next moment, when I think of my life and my activities, I can understand that I am really not what I am represented to be, by a section of selfish and envious people. I never took part in any political activity outside Bengal and do not hope to do so in future. I do not think any other provincial governments (other

than the Bengal Government) have any grievances against me. During the last six years, I never went out of Bengal except for attending the Congress Sessions, or occasionally in connection with some family matters. Why then am I prohibited to enter India, Burma or Ceylon? Ceylon is a British colony directly under Britain, and I have doubts if the prohibitory orders of the India Government will apply there.

The Government of Bengal want to restrain my movements, but did I really move about a good deal so long as I was free? Between October 1923 and October 1924, I had been out of Calcutta only twice—once to attend the District Conference at Khulna and then went to Nadia in connection with the election campaign of one of our candidates for the Bengal Council. From February 1924 till October of that year, I never for once went out of Calcutta. Attempts have been made to implicate me in the affairs of the Serajgunj Conference. But as Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation, I was extremely busy with the Municipal duties when the conference was actually in session. There was then a threat of strike by the scavengers of the city and it was not possible for me to leave Calcutta even for a minute at that time. My activities during May 1924 to October of that year must be known to everybody. Government were perfectly aware of all my movements during that period. If the purpose behind my arrest was simply to restrict my movements, I should say, my arrest was quite unwarranted and uncalled for.

In one matter particularly, Mr. Moberly has taken up a very unfeeling attitude. Government are aware

that I am now in exile for two years and a half, during which period I was not allowed to see any of my relatives, not even my parents. Government now propose to say that I am to go abroad for another two or three years during which period also I shall have no chance of meeting them.

This is certainly painful to me; but to those who are fond of me, it is still more so. For a Westerner it is not even possible to imagine what deep bonds of affection tie us to our relatives. I think this unfeeling attitude of Government is due to their ignorance of this fact. The Europeans think, since I am not a married man, I have no family ties and I must be without love and affection for anybody.

Government must have forgotten what sufferings I have gone through during these two and a half years. It is I who have suffered, not they. They have kept me imprisoned for such a long time without any reason. It was said of me that I was guilty of importing arms and ammunition and of plotting to murder Government officials. I was asked by many to state what I had to say in that regard. Let me say in reply that I am perfectly innocent. I believe, even the late Sir Edward Marshal Hall or Sir John Simon could not possibly say anything more than this in defence of themselves. When these charges were brought against me for the second time I asked them, "Why did the Police arrest me of all people?" I think it is for the Police to answer that. Since my arrest the Government of Bengal have neither yet given any allowance for the maintenance of my dependants nor for the upkeep of my house and property. I had sent a petition to the Viceroy in this

connection but that petition was suppressed by the Government of Bengal. To crown all, they are asking me to stay abroad for three years. I am to bear my own expenses during my exile in Europe. I don't see how one could call it a reasonable proposal. Government should see to it that I am released in the same state of health as I used to enjoy in 1924. Will not Government compensate for the loss of my health incurred during my incarceration? Government ought to bear all my expenses till I regain my lost health. How long will authorities remain callous to all these things? I could have considered this offer to be a generous one if they allowed me to go home before I left for Europe, if they agreed to bear all my expenses there, and if after my recovery they allowed me to return to India without any let or hindrance.

Mr. Moberley says, "Subhas Chandra should understand that Government can keep him under restraint until the repeal of the Ordinance." I can agree with Mr. Moberley in this respect. I know that Government can keep me under restraint as long as they please to do so. When the Ordinance will lapse as a matter of course, they may still keep me detained under Act III or some other law of that kind. Members of the Legislative Council may fret and foam, they may even reject the demand for the Executive Council's tour expense, still I know, Government may easily keep me in detention for the whole of my life. I would like to know if Government really intend to do so. The late Desabandhu Das used to call me a young old man. He took me for a pessimist. In one respect I am a pessimist indeed, for I always emphasize the darker side of things. I have considered

the worst possibilities of the present development, still I have decided to court death in prison rather than go into permanent exile from my motherland. But I do not feel depressed by these most gloomy prospects of my future, for I have great faith in the words of the poet :

“ The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

I have said everything that could be said either for or against the Government proposal. No one need be sorry to think that there is absolutely no chance of my early release. It must be extremely painful to father and mother. Please give them what consolation you can. We shall have to undergo lots of sufferings both individually and collectively before we are going to be released. I thank God that I am perfectly at peace with myself, and am ready to face the severest of trials unperturbed by consequences. I think, I am atoning for the sins of our whole race—that is my greatest satisfaction. Our thoughts and ideals will live for ever, the strength displayed by us will never be blotted out from the memory of the nation, and we shall leave behind us the legacy of our cherished dreams for future generations. This faith will sustain us for ever and enable us to face all trials and sufferings with courage and fortitude.

Hope to hear from you very soon.

Yours, etc.

LIFE'S PURPOSE

[Letter to his elder brother Sriyut Sarat Chandra Bose.]

Insein Jail,
May 9, 1927.

My dear brother,

I am not strong enough to write a long letter; I must wait till I regain sufficient strength to do so. I have had quite a long discussion with Barodada (Sriyut Satis Chandra Bose) regarding Government proposals. I was really very glad to have the opportunity to discuss the matter with him. I must thank the Home Member for the kindness thus shown to me. This seems to be a departure from the treatment I had been receiving hitherto.

I was informed of Government's reply by Barodada on the 27th of April. This reply makes the position more clear for both the parties concerned. After a thorough examination of the present position, I think, I should again send the same reply to the Government conditions, as I did on the 11th of April.

My decision is the result of a very simple judgment. A careful consideration would even confirm my decision further. I have arrived at this conclusion on a very simple analysis of life. A careful study of the situation has only strengthened my conviction. The longer I stay in prison the more I am convinced that at the root of the struggle for existence there lies a conflict of ideologies—a conflict between Truth and Untruth. Some would like to call it

different stages in the evolution of Truth. These ideas are not passive, they are active and militant. Like Hegel's "Absolute Idea", Hauptmann and Schopenhauer's "Blind Will", and Henri Bergson's "Elan Vital" these ideas, too, are active. They work their way forward. We are nothing but toys of clay with only a few sparks of the Divine flame illuminating our being. We have got to submit to this idea.

He that will resign himself to the Divine Will, in utter disregard of material comforts and discomforts, is bound to attain success in life. I have not the slightest doubt that my ideal will triumph in the long run. Hence I do not, in the least, care for my health, or for my future.

I have made my position perfectly clear in the reply I sent to the conditions set forth in Government proposals. Some critics have said that I have taken recourse to diplomacy with a view to securing better terms. I have been very greatly pained by this unfeeling insinuation. I am not a shopkeeper and do not believe in bargaining. I detest the slippery path of diplomacy. I take my stand on an ideal; that's all. I do not put such a high premium on life as to take recourse to diplomacy for the sake of saving my life. My idea of values must be different from that of market values. I do not think success or failure in life can be measured by physical or material comforts. We do not fight with the help of physical strength, nor is the fight meant for material gains. Says St. Paul—"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rules of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Freedom and Truth are the ideals we

want to reach and we shall succeed in our efforts as sure as day follows night. Our weak flesh may fail, but with firm faith and unconquerable spirit our ultimate victory is assured. God alone knows who amongst us will live to see our efforts crowned with success. As for myself, I can only say I shall go on doing my duty without caring for the result.

One thing more before I conclude this letter. It is not possible for me to decide at this moment if I shall be going to Switzerland. I don't think in the present state of my health I shall be able to stand the strain of a journey to Switzerland. For the present, I would like to stay at some sanatorium in India to recoup my health. There is no knowing when I shall be strong enough to go to Switzerland. Anyway my physicians think there can be no question of my going to Switzerland before I have sufficiently regained my health. Again, if it is possible to recoup my health at an Indian sanatorium, what would be the use of going to Switzerland unless I choose to go into a sort of self-imposed exile in a foreign land?

And then before I can decide about going to Switzerland I have to consider the financial side of the question—how to provide for the necessary finances I have to talk it over with my own people, and particularly with father and mother. I think, the political atmosphere of Bengal is going to change during the coming months, and the attitude of the Bengal Government, too, may change accordingly. All these things must be taken into consideration before I come to a decision. Anyway, I should like to be free to decide for myself without any pressure or compulsion being brought to bear on me. If,

however, my going to Switzerland is sought to be imposed on me as a necessary condition by Government, you can forthwith stop all negotiations with them. God is great—at least greater than His created things. Since we have put our faith in Him we can have no reason for regret.

I am really sorry to have caused pain to many who are attached to me and sympathetic; but I feel comforted to think that we who have been devoted to the same Motherland will always share the sorrows and sufferings of one another.

Hope you are all doing well.

Yours, etc.

TO THE CITIZENS OF NORTH CALCUTTA

Felsall Lodge,

Shillong,

10.8.27.

Dear Sirs,

Last year, I stood as a candidate for election to the Bengal Legislative Council from the North Calcutta Non-Mohammedan Constituency. In that connection I had addressed a letter to you on the 24th of September last from Mandalay Jail. Unfortunately, the letter did not reach you. For reasons best known to them, the authorities did not think it necessary to forward the letter to the proper quarters. To my query why they had suppressed such an ordinary letter I received no reply. Moreover, most of the letters I had written to a certain individual in connection with my election never reached him at all. While I was still in detention, a certain high official of Government told me that it was Government's intention to see to it that I could by no means carry on election work from inside the jail.

But although my letter did not reach you, my silent appeal from behind prison doors must have reached your hearts, so that you got me elected by a huge majority of votes, despite the opposition of a very powerful rival. When, one day, at about 10 in the night, we—myself and a few detenu-friends of mine in a small cell in Mandalay Jail—received the

news of your success, my heart at once went out to you in gratitude; but it was not possible for me then to express publicly my gratitude to you. I hope, however, across the hills and rivers and jungles, the silent message of my heart must have reached you all right.

I am particularly grateful to you for one reason. At a time when I was being victimized by Government and placed in that unenviable position when even intimate friends pretend not to know a person, you installed me on that high pedestal of honour in utter disregard of the mighty wrath of the Bureaucracy. The confidence you have thus reposed in me is not merely a personal honour to me, it is an honour shown to all political sufferers.

As a prisoner I had not had the opportunity of expressing my thankfulness to you or of consulting you on the various problems of the country. I had thought that immediately on my release I would be able to perform these two essential duties. There was absolutely no chance of my early release, but when at length I was rather unexpectedly set free, I found myself a physical wreck, confined to bed. Since my release I have not yet been able to do what as a matter of duty I ought to have done as your chosen representative. Before I could establish contact with you I had to come away to Shillong almost against my will with the object of recouping my health. It will be some time before I can enter the field of activity although I feel slightly better than before. So I decided in the meantime to approach you through this letter. I shall never in my life forget the tremendous welcome you accorded to me

after my release and all your good wishes for my speedy recovery. You have very greatly honoured me by giving me an opportunity of serving you. I only pray to God so that I may make proper use of the opportunity thus given to me. I feel honoured by your love and affection and particularly by the great trust reposed in me. My one prayer to God is that I may prove worthy of the honour you have done me.

Through your blessings and good wishes I am now on my way to recovery though it will be long before I can be fully restored to health. But physical fitness is one thing, mental peace quite another. Indeed, how can one rest at ease when so many of our patriotic young men are rotting in jail without trial, when numerous men and women are going through pangs of separation from their near and dear ones clapped far away in prison and subjected to daily humiliations, when so many of our homes have been virtually turned into dreary deserts because of the enforced absence of sons or brothers, husbands or fathers, as the case may be? The Governor of Bengal has kindly informed me that even if I fail to attend the next session of the Council my name will not be struck off the list of members. But when the question of the detenu will come up before the next session, I wish very much to be present there to discharge my duties. I do not know if my physicians will permit me to do so, still I would like to be in Calcutta for a few days at least to do what little I can as a faithful representative of my people. I have already sent notice of a few motions and questions in the hope that I shall be able to attend the session. If, however, my doctors refuse to allow me to come, I shall try to recoup my health

as quickly as possible, so that I may be back in the field of public service at the earliest opportunity. I see signs of a new awakening all around me to-day. It is desirable that all of us should remain ready and alert so that we can respond immediately to the call of the country which will come before long in the shape of a mighty onrush of life.

I have nothing more to say. Please accept my respectful greetings.

Yours, etc.

AN APPEAL TO THE CITIZENS

[The following appeal which was issued from the Mandalay Jail on the 24th of September, 1927, was held up by the authorities.]

I have been nominated by the All-India Congress Committee as a candidate for election to the Bengal Legislative Council from the North Calcutta Non-Mohammedan Constituency. Knowing that public opinion favours my candidature, and in the hope that this will give me an opportunity of serving my people and my country I have respectfully decided to accept the offer of the Congress Committee. If I were a free man I would have personally approached you and consulted you before I finally decided to stand as a candidate. But under the present circumstances, clapped as I am in prison, it is not possible for me to do so. I hope, however, you will be kind enough to excuse this unavoidable default on my part.

I have thought very deeply about the desirability or otherwise of standing as a candidate for election while one was in prison. The Congress Committee, too, have seriously considered this point and they think it would be worth my while to seek election to the Council. I believe if Desabandhu Chittaranjan were living to-day he would also ask me to stand as a candidate, as the Congress has done. I am supported in this view of mine by what he had said in connection with the re-election of Syt. Anil Baran Ray and Syt. Satyendra Chandra Mitra. Considering all these things, and believing that there is some justification for my seeking election, I make bold to approach you

to-day with this appeal of mine. It goes without saying that my decision has been influenced to a great extent by public opinion which favours my candidature. If it were possible for me I would have approached you personally and placed before you all my views on our national problems and sought your opinion on them. But, unfortunately, Government has deprived me of that opportunity. It is now going to be about two years that I have been kept in detention without any trial. During this long period, in spite of repeated requests from me, Government have refused to produce me before any court of justice. I was not even told either privately or publicly what specific charges they have against me, or what evidence they have in their possession to substantiate those charges. Regarding my offence, if it can be called an offence at all, I can only say that instead of following the beaten track of a subject-race I have devoted myself heart and soul to the service of my country as an humble servant of the National Congress. Besides, I am not a prisoner only; for the last twenty months, I have been an exile from my motherland. For long, long months I am cut off from the sacred soil of my motherland; but I have this satisfaction that my incarceration has not been in vain. All my sufferings have blossomed into a rose of the deepest hue. Before I came here I used to love my motherland; but due to this enforced separation my love for India has increased a hundredfold. India, the land of dreams, the land of hallowed memories, appears from a distance more fascinating than ever in all her beauty and splendour. My exile has served as a veritable touchstone which has made me worthier day by day for that ideal of supreme sacrifice with

which I had once entered my field of activity. I feel hallowed by the realization of that eternal truth which we breathe in our rivers and fields, and that vital spirit of the land which has found expression in the creative works of numerous poets and artists and men of genius from Bankim to the Desabandhu. This sacred realization of a great truth has more than compensated for my two years' sufferings in jail. I now understand what a rare fortune and signal honour it is to dare and suffer for a motherland like mine.

It is customary in an appeal of this kind to give an account of one's attainments and achievements; unfortunately, I cannot boast of any achievements on the strength of which I can claim your assistance and support. When five years ago India was swept by a mighty surge of life, and Indians were vying with one another in sacrificing themselves at the altar of the motherland, I too came out of the precincts of the University to join the fight for my country's liberation.

I was from the beginning inspired by an ideal of sacrifice, and I knew there could be no greater fulfilment of my life's purpose than by sacrificing myself completely at the feet of Mother India. I did not take up politics merely as a temporary vocation. Hence, I prepared myself in every way for all the sufferings, and trials, and tribulations that are inevitably the lot of a political worker in a country under foreign domination. How far I have succeeded in that will be judged by my countrymen. During this brief but eventful career of my life, storms and blasts have blown over me in all their fury. Fortunately they have enabled me to measure properly my own strength and worth; and I feel confident to say that I shall

be able to traverse the entire length of that thorny path which I chose for myself in the very prime of my youth. I shall never rest content till I have fulfilled the sacred vow I had taken then, without caring for what the future might have in store for me. My whole life and all my dearly bought experiences have taught me one great truth—education, culture, and activities of a subject-race will be of no use whatsoever, unless they are all harnessed to that one supreme purpose, namely that of liberating the country from foreign domination. From the inmost recesses of my heart I hear only one voice ceaselessly ringing in my ears, “Who is there that would not be a free man? Who is there that would live the life of a slave?” With folded hands I beseech you to give me your blessings so that the sacred duty of winning Swaraj be my sole purpose, my only aim in life, and that I may go on fighting India’s battle for freedom to the last breath of my life.

I took my first lesson in the art of serving my people at the feet of the Desabandhu Chittaranjan whose life was a living example of the very spirit of renunciation. So long as he was living I followed him at every step regardless of consequences. In his absence to-day, I have placed before me for emulation the ideal of his great life, and equipped with all that I have learnt from his super-human personality I hope to go forward in life with the single-minded devotion of a loyal servant. May God help me in this great endeavour.

The question of my election I leave entirely in your hands; for what can a helpless prisoner possibly do in an election fight from across this distance of

hills and rivers and seas? Although an insignificant servant of my Motherland, I am not wholly a stranger to you. I may not have personal acquaintance with many of you, still I think I have some claim on your love and affection. I beseech you not to forget that my victory will be a victory for the Congress, for public opinion, as well as for yourselves. In the coming election, which is rather an expensive affair, I depend entirely on your assistance and support. My only desire is to get an opportunity to serve you. I have not the slightest doubt that you will give me the rare opportunity and proud privilege of serving my people. I have nothing to add. To me you are the living representatives of Mother India. Please accept the respectful greetings of a prisoner from across the seas.

DESABANDHU

1

[Letter to the late Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay.]

Mandalay Jail,

12.8.25.

Dear Sir,

I have read your 'Memoirs' in monthly Basumati three times over. I have liked it immensely. With your deep insight into human nature, your intimate association with the Desabandhu, and your extraordinary power of analysing the smallest incidents, you have got to the very soul of truth, and the result has been this superb piece of writing.

Those who happened to be his most intimate followers have some painful memories of their own which they could hardly share with others. By referring to some of those painful things you have not only helped in the establishment of truth about that great man, but have also lightened the burden of our hearts to a great extent. "Indeed, the greatest curse of a subject-country is that in the fight for independence greater opposition comes from one's own people than from foreigners." From what happened in the Desabandhu's life, his followers have known the bitter truth of these words.

The following words in your article I liked best—"Ours is that burning sensation that one feels at the

loss of one's nearest and dearest one. We, who lived and moved and had our being in him, have not the language to express our grief, and then it is also too sacred to bear talking about." Indeed, it is never possible to share one's inmost feelings with others, and one never likes to pour out one's heart to unappreciative ears. Who else can understand our feelings except those who, like us, have loved and lost?

Another thing that you have said has had a great appeal for me—"Our service to the country was more in the nature of service to the Desabandhu" As a matter of fact, I knew of many who had no faith in his views, nor in his programme, but attracted by the magnetic influence of his great heart could by no means help carrying out his wishes, and he too in his turn loved everybody irrespective of his personal opinion or views. I never saw him judge human character by our ordinary social standards. His whole life was based on the simple faith that every man was, in the very nature of things, a mixture of good and evil, and if he was to be loved he must be loved in spite of his failings and shortcomings.

Many used to think that we were his blind followers. As a matter of fact, his closest associates had the most serious differences of opinion with him. Speaking for myself, I had differed from, and even quarrelled with him, on numerous occasions. But I knew, in spite of all quarrels, my devotion to him would suffer no change and, at the same time, I too would never be deprived of his immense love for me. He also had the faith that under any storm or stress I was sure to be there by his side. All our quarrels used to be settled at the mediation of Syta. Basanti

Devi. Alas! where is that man to-day whom it was a privilege to love and even quarrel with !

At one place you have said, "Just imagine the Desabandhu's position at that time—without men, without money, without a paper to support him, and even the smallest fry had a fling at him." Yes, I distinctly remember those dismal days. We came back from the Gaya Congress only to find the papers of Bengal full of untruths and half-truths about us. Not to speak of saying anything in support of us they even refused us the hospitality of their columns to state our view-point. The "Swarajya" funds were then almost exhausted. When money was most badly needed, it was not to be had from any quarter. The house which once was crowded beyond capacity was hardly visited by anybody now. Only a few of us used to meet and have our daily sittings there. When at length the tide turned and the house was restored to its former glory, there was once again the same rush of people—outsiders, favour-seekers, and service-hunters, who kept the Desabandhu so busy all the time that we did not even have time to talk business with him. How funds came to be raised, how we started a newspaper of our own and how public opinion turned in our favour is a long, long story of tremendous labour and hardship which the outside public never knew, and perhaps never will know. But the man who was the high-priest of all these gigantic efforts and the moving spirit behind the scenes vanished all of a sudden before those efforts were successful. His earthly body could no longer stand the strain, and crumbled under the

weight of heavy pressure. Moreover, the smouldering fire within slowly consumed him.

Many seem to think that the purpose behind his service to the country was to sacrifice himself at the feet of the Motherland, but I know his purpose was greater than that. He wanted to sacrifice not only himself but his entire family, and in that attempt he had actually succeeded to a very great extent. During the stormy days of 1921, he decided to send one by one every member of his family to jail. Unless his own son courted imprisonment he could not ask other young people to do so. I personally do not think much of such an idea. Such consideration should not have place in an ideal like his. We knew for certain that he was soon going to be arrested. There was thus no need of sending his son to jail in the meantime, and we resolutely said we would never allow our women to go to prison so long as a single man remained outside. There was a long, long dispute and no decision was arrived at; we could by no means accept his point of view. At length he said, "This is my command, you have to carry it out." We had to yield then, although we did it under protest.

His eldest daughter was married, so he could not possibly order her about and send her to jail. The younger daughter was then engaged for marriage. There was serious difference of opinion regarding the advisability of sending her too. He was all in favour of doing that and the girl, too, was willing to go. But everybody else decided otherwise—it would be wrong to let her go. First, she was in a weak state of health, and then she was soon going to be married. So the Desabandhu had to yield to our opinion. At length

it was decided to send Bhombal (his son Chiraranjan) first. He was to be followed by Basanti Devi (the Desabandhu's wife) and Urmila Devi (his sister), and he himself would go as soon as the call would come.

These events are known to everybody. But how many of our countrymen know what was happening behind the scenes—what ideal, what inspiration was at work at the root of those events? His "Sadhana" was not confined to himself alone. He carried the whole family with him in his experiments with Truth.

I think that the greatness of a man is revealed not so much in the big events of his life as in small isolated incidents. I have very carefully read all the articles written by the followers and co-workers of the Desabandhu in the monthly Basumati. Most of these are full of platitudes and do not show any insight into the greatness of his character. Only in your article is there an attempt at giving an intimate picture of the man through a skilful analysis of small incidents of his life. I cannot tell you adequately how immensely I have liked the thing * * * * I had expected a little bit more from the Desabandhu's followers and co-workers. It would be better if they had written nothing at all.

Sometimes I cannot help thinking that the Desabandhu's countrymen, and his followers too, were to some extent responsible for his premature death. If they had shared with him the burden of his work, he would not have worked himself to death. This is what happens in our country. Once we have accepted a man as our leader we throw all the

responsibilities on his shoulder and make the most impossible demands on his time and energy. We leave all our political problems to be tackled by him, while we sit idle and have an easy time.

Well, I have lost the thread and strayed away from the main point. We all wish—and my friends here ask me to convey to you their special request—that you write a few more articles of this kind about the Desabandhu. Your association with him has been a long one; so we do not think you will even lack materials for writing these ‘Memoirs,’ and when you do so you may rest assured that far away in Mandalay Jail there will be a few Bengalee detainees who will read those articles with great interest and enjoy them with all their heart.

Perhaps I would not be here much longer; but I am no longer very anxious about my release. My heart sinks within me when I think of the dreary desolation that awaits me outside the prison. Here I spend my days somehow in happiness and sorrow, indulging in memories and fanciful dreams. The pain one feels when one strikes against the iron bars of a cage is not wholly without a feeling of pleasure. If I have loved the man and if the crime of having loved him has caused me suffering and incarceration, I still have satisfaction to know how great and sincere has been my love for him. I may have to knock and knock against the bolted door, my heart may get bruised, still I shall have some comfort, some satisfaction in my heart, but desolation outside will be too much for me, and then there will be responsibilities awaiting me outside. I do not exactly feel equal to those tasks.

If I had not come here, perhaps I could never have gauged the depth of my love for Bengal. Sometimes I think Rabindranath must have echoed the sentiments of a prisoner when he said—

I love thee, Bengal dear,
All my life, thy sky and thy air
Have played a lovely tune in my heart.

When even for a moment the beauty of Bengal in all her colours goes fleeting across my mind's eye, I think my imprisonment in Mandalay Jail has certainly been worth it, if not for anything else, at least for the realization of my great love for Bengal. Who could have imagined before that so much beauty lay hidden in Bengal's soil, her rivers, her sky and her air !

I do not know why I have written such a long letter. I never thought of writing to you before; but as I read your article certain thoughts came into my mind and I wrote them down. Since I have written the letter I had better send it to you. Please accept respectful greetings from all of us here. You may send me an answer if you think of doing so. I do not expect to have any reply, still I give you my address in case you feel like writing.

Yours, etc.,
Subhas
c/o, D.I.G., I.B., C.I.D.,
13, Elysium Row,
Calcutta.

[Sent to Sriyut Hemendranath Das Gupta, author of the Desabandhu's biography.]

Mandalay Jail,
20.2.26.

I do not feel confident enough to write anything publicly about the late Desabandhu Chittaranjan Das. I do not think I shall ever be able to do so. My personal relations with him were of such a deep nature that I do not feel like talking about those things except with those who are most intimate with me. Moreover, he was so great and I consider myself so small in comparison that I have not yet been able to fully realize how versatile was his genius, how large was his heart, and how noble was his character. With my limited powers of head and heart and my poor language it would be impudent on my part to attempt to say anything about that great soul. But one has to do ever so many things at the request of friends although one might have neither the desire nor the ability to do so. In fact, I am making this humble attempt only at the request of my friend Sriyut Hemendranath Das Gupta. It would make a volume if I were to write all that I have known about him from personal association, or if I were to attempt an analysis of his life and work as far as I could understand them. I have neither the capacity nor am I in a mood to write at any considerable length. I shall only say a few things in response to a friend's request.

I am not aware of a good many things regarding the Desabandhu's chequered career. Perhaps I do not know even all the facts that have appeared in the biographies so far published. Only for the last three

years of his life did I associate with him and worked as one of his followers. During this brief period I might have learnt a world of things from him; but one does not know how to value a thing so long as the thing is there. Particularly in the case of the Desabandhu I had persuaded myself that he would be living for a few more years and that he was not going to die till his earthly mission had been fulfilled. The Desabandhu was a great believer in horoscopes. Although I was no believer in those things, still it would not be wholly correct if I were to say that I was not partially infected with his faith in his own horoscope. So far as I remember he had told me several times that he was destined to undergo two years' exile in a foreign land. On the termination of the period of exile he would return in full glory. Government would come to an understanding with him and he would be installed in power; not till then would he die. I had told him at that time that I would be always willing to go into exile with him. To tell the truth, after my own exile I very often remembered the reading of his horoscope and was afraid lest he should have to come here too. But who knew then that a far greater misfortune would befall Bengal, and, for the matter of that, the whole of India.

* * * * *

I had my last meeting with him in Alipore Central Jail. The Desabandhu was not keeping well; he had gone to Simla for a few days' rest but came down to Calcutta immediately on receipt of the news of our arrest. He came twice to Alipore Central Jail to see me, and we met for the last time on the eve of my transfer to Berhampore Jail. At the end of the talk, I

touched his feet and said, "Perhaps it will be long before we meet again." "Oh, no," he said in his characteristic cheerful voice, "I am going to have you released very soon." Alas, who knew then, I would not meet him again on this earth ! Every little detail of that last meeting, every word that he had spoken made a deep impression on me and it will remain throughout my life. The memory of that last meeting is practically my only treasure in life.

Many have tried to find out the secret behind his tremendous hold on our masses. As one of the Desabandhu's followers I would like to point out one thing which accounts for his great influence. I have seen how he could love people irrespective of their failings and shortcomings. His love came as a spontaneous flow from within his heart without even taking into account the qualities or faults of the person concerned. He could easily draw towards him people whom we usually shun and hate. People of all kinds used to be attracted to him so that his influence extended to all spheres of life. Like a whirlpool in the sea he could draw into his fold numerous people from all around. I know of numerous instances where people literally slaved for him. Even those who did not yield to his great learning, people who remained unimpressed by his eloquence, or ever unmoved by his tremendous sacrifices, would yet feel the irresistible attraction of his great heart. His followers and co-workers had become like members of his own family. He could have staked everything for their good and welfare. Give your own life for others, and others will lay down their lives for you. This was exemplified in the life of the Desabandhu

There was nothing his followers would not do for him. They would ungrudgingly go through any suffering and hardship for his sake. Of course, there was actually no occasion for sacrifice of life,* but barring that, it could be said of his followers that they gladly went through all kinds of sufferings for him and even felt proud to have done so. The Desabandhu knew it very well that in his non-violent struggle he had under him a number of soldiers on whom he could depend under all conditions. I feel proud to say that till the last day of his life these non-violent soldiers of his carried out his commands unflinchingly in the face of all risks and dangers.

This disciplined and fearless band of followers made some of our so-called leaders feel jealous of the Desabandhu, although, I think, they themselves yearned to have a similar band of workers under them. But I do not think they were ready to pay the price for it. Unless you know how to love your followers how can you expect them to make sacrifices for you? The Desabandhu never made any distinction, like ordinary men, between what was his own and what belonged to others. His house had become almost a public property. Everybody had free access everywhere—even to his bedroom, and all people had equal claims to his worldly possessions as well as on his generous heart. He not only loved his followers but was even prepared to court insults on their account. One day a near relation of his found fault with one of our workers on account of

*Some workers actually died while engaged in Congress work in connection with Tarakeswar Satyagraha

certain lapses on his part and said, "I hate him." The Desabandhu was evidently hurt. "Well, you may; but I don't hate him. That's my difficulty." On many an occasion he quarrelled with outsiders on behalf of his co-workers. Several times this happened in my presence, and I saw how great was his love for his followers and how he courted insults for their sake.

Those who did not know the inside story, used to be astonished at his tremendous power of organization, and astonishing certainly it was, for what the Desabandhu did was absolutely new in the field of Indian politics. The organization that he had built up was as solid as a rock, and I can say very definitely that at the root of it all was the bond of love that existed between the leader and his followers. With his immense capacity for loving people, irrespective of their merits or demerits, and by virtue of his extraordinary tact he succeeded in bringing together people of different tastes and different ways of thinking. Numerous people used to help him in private although they neither belonged to his party nor subscribed to his views.

Many of our so-called leaders have openly characterized the Desabandhu's followers as being servile to him. I do not think anybody who was ever present at our discussions at the Desabandhu's residence would corroborate this charge against us. How could I call those people servile in temperament when I found them expressing their views in a most fearless and outspoken manner during these discussions? Fierce differences of opinion arose between the leader and the followers and not unoften

wordy battles were fought. At times the Desabandhu used to lose his temper; but he never really got displeased with an outspoken member of the party. On the contrary, we often felt he paid much too close an attention to a dissentient voice. Of course, it was true that in spite of difference of opinion his followers never behaved in an indisciplined manner, nor did they ever in revenge launch an attack on the leader and subsequently join the enemy's camp. Difference of opinion there might be, but once the issue was decided by vote, the course adopted was to be followed by everybody. Loyalty to a party or to a community is no new thing in India. Indians first received this teaching from Lord Buddha two thousand five hundred years ago. Even to-day the following Buddhist prayer rings throughout the world—

I dedicate myself to the Buddha ;
I dedicate myself to the Dharma ;
I dedicate myself to the Sangha.

In fact, no great undertaking, whether religious or political, is possible in this world without party organization and party discipline.

I know of another charge brought against him. It has been said that moving as he did in the vortex of politics the Desabandhu had to associate with people without education and culture. From 1921 till his death the Desabandhu had come into contact with numerous workers. I do not know that he considered these people to be uneducated and uncultured. At least, he never gave any indication of it in his ordinary dealings with them. Free from vanity as he was, and exceedingly modest by nature, he might have successfully concealed his real feelings towards them. I have

definite recollection of at least one incident. After his release from jail he was given a great ovation at a meeting organized by the students of Calcutta. In the address that was presented to him mention was made of his great qualities of head and heart and of his tremendous sacrifice for the cause of the country. The Desabandhu was deeply touched by this spontaneous expression of love and affection by the youths of the nation. His was a spirit ever fresh and young. So the message of the youths easily touched the chords of his heart. When he rose for a reply to the address he was overwhelmed by his own feelings. Completely ignoring his own sacrifices and sufferings, he began to speak about the sacrifices of the youths of the country; but he could hardly proceed with the speech. Overpowered by emotion his voice was choked. He stood silent and motionless, and tears ran down his cheeks. The idol of the youths wept, and the youths wept too.

I cannot imagine how he could consider those people unworthy of association for whom his love was so great and sympathies even greater.

Of course those who worked with the Desabandhu and are still serving the cause he held dear, have no inflated notion of their own learning, or culture, or social status. I hope they will continue to be as humble and modest as they used to be.

The last letter I received from the Desabandhu was written from Patna. That letter is my most treasured possession to-day. It gives a clear indication of his mental agonies caused by the wholesale arrest of his trusted followers. How intense was his pain

could be realized only by those who had come into contact with his great heart.

I had the privilege to be in the same jail with him for eight months in 1921-22. For a couple of months, we were in the Presidency Jail occupying two adjacent cells, and the remaining six months we were in one big hall along with several other friends in the Alipore Central Jail. During those few months I used to look after his personal comforts. We did the cooking too for him in Alipore Jail. I consider it a rare privilege to have had the opportunity of serving him for those eight months. Prior to my arrest in December 1921, I had worked under him only for three or four months. During that brief period, I had not had the opportunity of knowing him very intimately. But during the eight months I spent with him in jail I came to know him really. There is a saying in English, "familiarity breeds contempt," but of the Desabandhu, at least, I can safely say that having known him most intimately my love and admiration for him increased a hundred-fold. I think many will bear out the truth of what I say.

The Desabandhu had an endless fund of humour and fun in him. This came as a revelation to me during those jail-days. He used to keep us in excellent spirits by his incessant sallies of humour. In the Presidency Jail, a Gurkha soldier kept guard on us, bayonet in hand. One morning it was found that the Gurkha soldier was replaced by a Hindusthani sepoy with a baton in his hand. "Hallo ! Subhas", he called out, "so, at length a flute replaces a sword ! Do they really think, we are quite as harmless as that?" There was never any conscious effort in his

humour. It flowed out as spontaneous as a mountain torrent. I want to refer specially to this particular trait in his character, because I think that Bengalees as a race have not a very high sense of humour, in comparison with the other races of the world.

With a little sense of humour a man can keep up his spirits even under most adverse circumstances. You will fully realize the truth of this if you ever happen to be in the stifling atmosphere of a jail. The Desabandhu's humour was of such simple and innocent type that it never made us feel ill at ease in spite of our difference in age and status.

He was vastly read in English and Bengalee literature. Of the English poets, he was a great admirer of Browning, many of whose poems he knew by heart. In jail, we very often found him reading the works of Browning. His ordinary talk and even his jokes were interspersed with literary quotations so that sometimes I missed the point unless he explained things for me. He was forgetful about many things, but in matters literary his memory was prodigious. By introducing a literary flavour in his daily life he made literature an object of perennial interest—a thing to be enjoyed and appreciated by all.

Once the Desabandhu borrowed a sum of Rs. 10,000 at an interest at 9 p.c. for a certain relation of his. He could not repay the amount within the specified time, so the creditor's attorney came to see him to get the handnote renewed. The Desabandhu was then in Alipore Jail, and we were with him. His son Chiraranjan too was there. He told us that nobody in the family was aware of that particular debt. The relative for whom he had borrowed the money

was now worth several lacs; but the Desabandhu readily put his signature to a new bond. There had been numerous cases in which he incurred debts for others without the knowledge of his wife and children.

I have seen people who never lost an opportunity of speaking ill of the Desabandhu, though running to him for help in times of difficulty. One of these people once came for a loan of Rs. 200/-. The Desabandhu said, "I have got only Rs. 600 with me, how can I give you Rs. 200/-?" But the gentleman insisted, and our Desabandhu at once gave him the money without further argument. This happened after his release from jail.

During the eight months I spent with him, I had the occasion to know him thoroughly well, but never did I notice either in his speech or action one single thing that smacked of pettiness. He had numerous opponents in the field of politics; but he never had any grievance against them; on the contrary, he was always ready to help them if his help were needed.

His time in jail was mostly spent in studies. With the intention of writing a book on the national problems of India he had ordered for a large number of books on politics and economics. Sufficient materials were collected and he had started writing the book but could not finish it while in jail. Once he was out, he found himself in the midst of ceaseless activities and never could finish the work he had set his hands to. During those days, I used to have long discussions with him about our political and national problems. In no sphere of life—whether it were politics, economics or religion—was he ever in favour of following set doctrines. It was his belief that our

society, our politics, and our philosophy would in the natural course be evolved out of our cultural heritage and our pressing national problems. Hence he could never countenance any struggle or conflict between classes and communities. In this respect he was opposed to the doctrines of Karl Marx. Till the last day of his life it was his hope that all our differences could be resolved by concluding pacts between different religious communities, so that all Indians, irrespective of race, caste and creed, would come forward to join the fight for Swaraj. Many used to ridicule his idea of bringing about unity through pacts. Unity, they said, depended on real sympathy for each other; it could not possibly come through bargaining. The Desabandhu used to argue that human society itself was based on pacts and compromises, and that man could not last a day on this earth without mutual understanding. Whether it be in family life, in friendly circles, in community life, or in political field, men could not possibly live as social beings unless they came together in a spirit of compromise though possessing different tastes and views. All over the world trade and commerce are carried on through pacts and contracts. The question of love and affection does not come in there.

I do not think that among the Hindu leaders of India, Islam had a greater friend than in the Desabandhu. Still it was this Desabandhu who came forward to lead the Satyagraha movement at Tarakeswar. Hinduism was extremely dear to his heart; he could even lay down his life for his religion, but at the same time he was absolutely free from dogmatism of any kind. That explains how it was

possible for him to love Islam. Let me ask, how many of our Hindu leaders can declare on oath that they do not hate the Muslims? On the other hand, how many of the Muslim leaders can likewise say that they do not hate the Hindus? In religious belief, the Desabandhu was a Vaishnavite; but people of all faiths had a place in his large heart. We might settle our disputes through pacts but he did not believe that was the only means of securing cordial relations between the Hindus and Muslims. It was his intention, therefore, to bring about a lasting Hindu-Muslim *entente* through a kind of cultural synthesis. While in jail, he used to have frequent discussions with Maulana Akram Khan regarding the points of affinity between the two cultures. If I remember aright, Maulana Sahib had agreed to write a treatise on the cultural unity between the two great communities.

That Swaraj in India meant primarily the uplift of the masses, and not necessarily the protection of the interests of the upper classes, was a matter of conviction with the Desabandhu. I do not think of any other front-rank leader of our country preaching that doctrine with as much emphasis as he did. Swaraj for the masses is not a new thing in the world. Europe preached this doctrine long ago; but it is comparatively new in the field of Indian politics. Of course, thirty years ago Swami Vivekananda spoke in that vein in his book entitled "Bartaman Bharat", but that message of the Swamiji was never echoed from our political platforms.

The things which the Desabandhu went on preaching ever since his release till the last day of his

life had been deeply pondered over by him while he was in prison. Sometimes he used to discuss those things with us. The question of entering the Councils was decided upon there, and only after prolonged discussions could he win us over to his point of view. There was a good deal of party wrangling inside the jail over this controversial issue. The idea of bringing out a daily paper in English was also mooted there. Unfortunately, some of his most cherished wishes are yet to be fulfilled.

I cannot help mentioning another thing in connection with his jail life—his love for the convicts. When we were in Alipore Jail, a convict named Mathur used to work in our ward. Mathur was what in jail language is called a Purano Chor (old thief). Perhaps it would be wrong to call him a mere thief, he was a dacoit. He had eight or nine previous convictions. But like many more of his class he was otherwise a very simple-hearted person. After working for a few days Mathur grew very much attached to the Desabandhu, and he started calling him 'father.' The Desabandhu, too, grew very fond of him. Gradually this man was drawn towards us all. As he sat massaging his feet, Mathur used to tell him the story of his life. Before his release the Desabandhu asked Mathur to come to his house when he would be set free, and never again to take to dacoity. Mathur was really glad to hear this and promised not to revert to his old ways of life.

On the day Mathur was released the Desabandhu sent a man to the jail gate to bring him home. Mathur was with him for three years. As his personal servant, he travelled from one end of India to

another. Being an old convict he was for sometime shadowed by the police. But they left watching him when they found he had actually taken sanctuary with the Desabandhu. The policemen used to say, "Ah, the Desabandhu has made a man of this wretch." I had expected that Mathur would never again go astray; but when after the Desabandhu's death I made enquiries in one of my letters about Mathur I was informed that during the Desabandhu's stay in Darjeeling he had run away with a large number of silver plates and dishes from the Russa Road residence. This strange story reminded me of *Les Miserables*. I still believe, if Mathur were all the time with the Desabandhu, he would have by no means fallen a prey to temptation. He must have committed the theft under a momentary impulse of weakness but, I am sure, if the great man were living to-day Mathur would again return to him in tears, and throw himself at his feet. God alone knows what will now happen to Mathur.

Everyone will wonder to think how a man can at once be a big lawyer, a great lover of men, a devout Vaishnava, a shrewd politician, and a conquering hero. I have tried to get a solution of this problem through anthropological studies. I do not know if I have succeeded in my attempt. The present-day Bengalee race is an admixture of Aryan, Dravidian and Mongolian blood. Each race has some peculiar characteristics of its own. Hence, when there is an admixture of blood, there must be an admixture of racial characteristics too. Due to this admixture of blood the genius of the Bengalee is so versatile and Bengal's life so colourful. The religiosity and

idealism of the Aryans, love of art and devotionism of the Dravidians, intellectuality and realism of the Mongolians have all very happily blended together in the Bengalee character. That the Bengalees are intellectual and emotional at the same time, at once realistic and idealistic, imitative and creative is due to this admixture of blood. If the blood of a particular race runs through your veins you must have imbibed from birth some characteristics, something from the culture of that race.

Those acquainted with Bengal's history and literature will admit that in spite of its belonging to Aryan culture, the culture of Bengal has assumed a distinct form of its own. Swami Dayanand's Arya Samaj movement swept the whole of Northern India, but how was it that he could not get any footing on the soil of Bengal? And why do thousands of educated Bengalees adore and draw inspiration from Ramkrishna Paramhansadeva, the devotee of the goddess Kali? Why does the system of *Dayabhaga* prevail in Bengal? Why did Buddhism, driven out from everywhere, find its last refuge in Bengal? Why did *Navanyaya*, or Neo-logic, originate in Bengal? Why did not Bengal accept Shankara's *Mayavada*? Why, after Buddhism was ousted from Bengal, did Achintya-Bhedabhedavada rise up as a protest against Shankara's theory? No sooner do we raise these questions than it begins to be clear that Bengal's culture has something uncommon and unique about it. On its cultural side three strains are visible—(1) *Tantra*, (2) *Vaishnavism* and (3) *Navanyaya* and Raghunandan's *Smriti*. On the side of *Nyaya* and *Smriti*, Bengal has a close kinship with

Aryavarta; through *Vaishnavism* she maintains a life-line with the south, while through the *Tantras* she has a relationship with the races living in the Tibetan, Burmese and Himalayan regions.

The pursuit of *Nyaya* has helped the Bengalee to be logical and argumentative. It was this racial characteristic in the Desabandhu which had made him a formidable barrister. The logician and the advocate both are dealers in logomachy. I do not know if he had ever studied the ancient *Nyaya* systems of India, but he was well grounded in Western logic. He could argue like some great *Naiyark* Pundit and had also the gift of devastating his opponents by torrents of eloquence. I have no doubt that he would have been a famous logician had he been born a few centuries earlier in Navadvipa.

It was Bengal's *Vaishnavism* and *Dvaitadvaitavada* (a form of qualified Monism) that saved him from Agnosticism, and through dry *Vedanta* led him finally to the path of Love. As a philosophical doctrine he accepted *Achintya-Bhedabhedavada* as the most genuine one. Though in many ways an ascetic, asceticism was not a part of his religion. God and His *Lila* (Creation, Doings) are equally true; the world is not false because God is true. So in order to attain to God there is no need of annulling the world of the senses. God's *Lila* is eternal and its stage is not only in the world outside but also in the heart of man. Man's soul is an eternal *Vrindaban** and there the *Lila* of God with His *Jiva* (created being), of *Krishna* with *Radha*, is for ever and ever. He is the

* The name of the place of Krishna's *Lila* in the traditional story.

Lord of Delight and He is enjoyed and approached through all that is delightful. It is obvious that a man who holds such views cannot be a negativist. Indeed the Desabandhu had accepted the world and the human life in its fullest. He believed that with the help of *Dvaitadvaitavada* all the contradictions of life could be resolved and harmony attained. That is why *Vaishnavism* became the last refuge of his life. In his conversations and lectures he would often point out that he should not view politics, economics, philosophy and religion in isolation. They are intimately related to one another and our life would miss its completeness if we left out any of these.

The philosophy which had thus resolved the conflicts of his religious strivings, had also succeeded, in its practical aspect, in establishing a relationship of love and friendliness with all and sundry. As he had achieved a synthesis in life, in the sphere of action also he could unite men of various tastes and temperaments. Since there was nothing false, nor a sham, in his own make-up, he could never stand such a thing in others.

If, in the course of our discussions in jail, we ever referred to his indiscriminate generosity, he would at once retort by saying, "You think I am an utter fool and that people cheat me. Well, I know everything; it is my duty to give, and I do that. It will be for Him to judge, not me."

It was the influence of the *Tantras* which have taught the Bengalees to worship Shakti, or Power, and that must have made the Desabandhu a hero of extraordinary prowess. Of course, he had never done any Sadhana (religious practices) of the Tantric school—at least I know of none. But I do not accept

that one cannot be strong unless one does such Sadhana as *Kulachar*, *Virachar*, *Chakranusthan*, etc. The essence of the Tantras is the worship of Power. According to them, the ultimate reality is *Adya Shakti* (Basic Power), that which creates, upholds, and destroys, that is Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswar. The devotee worships that Basic Power in the image of the Mother. It is because of the deep influence of the Tantras that the Bengalees as a race are devoted to mother, and this is also the reason why they love to worship the Supreme Being in the image of the Mother. People of other races and religions (such as the Jews, the Arabs, the Christians) worship God as father. Sister Nivedita thinks that in those communities, in which men occupy a more important position than women, people naturally contemplate God as father. On the other hand, in societies where women have precedence over men, people learn to worship God as Mother. Anyway, it is well known that the Bengalees love to think of God,—and why God alone, even Bengal and India,—as Mother. We think of our country as Motherland, but the correct English expression is Fatherland, and our use of 'Motherland' is rather faulty from the point of English usage.

Most of our great writers afford illustrations of this mother-cult in their writings.

Bankim wrote :—

“Hail O Mother !

Well-watered, fruitful, cooled by the western breeze
Green with crops, O Mother !”

Dwijendralal sang :—

“When that Mother India emerged out of the blue waters
of the Sea.”

And Rabindranath sang :—

“ Oh my mother-land let me lay my head at thy feet.”

The above instances reveal the influence of the Tantric conception of the Mother. The Desabandhu was a votary of the mother-cult. In family-life his devotion to his mother is quite well known. In Alipore Jail he used often to give us readings from Bankim Chandra. He was extremely fond of the three different images of the Mother as painted by Bankim. He used to go into ecstasies over these descriptions. One could easily feel the depth of his emotions to see him in that state of ecstasy. His journal “Narayana” contained discussions on both *Vaishnavism* and *Saktism*. The few articles on *Durga Puja* published in that journal are full of profound thoughts.

The influence of the *Tantras* is apparent even in his daily life. Everyone knows of his great reverence for his mother and his belief in women’s education and their emancipation. He did not at all accept the view of the *Sankarites* that women are the gateway to hell. Both in his thoughts and practical life we see the influence of the *Tantras* in the most pronounced form. In the Desabandhu were embodied the finest elements of Bengal’s culture and tradition.

Both his virtues and failings were peculiar to the race he belonged to. The greatest pride in his life was that he was a Bengalee. That was why he was so much loved and adored by the Bengalees.

He often used to say that what makes the Bengalee is a compound of his good and bad points. He felt wounded if any one made fun of or satirized the

Bengalees as being emotional. It was, he thought, a matter of pride, and not of shame, that we are susceptible to emotions.

That Bengal has a certain distinction, which has expressed itself in her landscape, her literature, her folk-songs and her character, I do not think that any one before the Desabandhu had expressed with such emphasis. True, these ideas were not his own. Thinkers like Bankim, Bhudeva and others had initiated them in the fields of culture and literature, and the Desabandhu followed their lead. All the same, I am bound to admit that it was through his deep realization of these tendencies, and for his attempts in the pages of the "Narayana," and through other means to spread these ideas, as well as for the money and labour he spent on original research in these subjects, that the Bengalees must always remain grateful to him. I for myself can say that it was from him and his writings that I have learnt about this uniqueness of Bengal.

The question has been raised if culture is one or diverse. There are those who say that they are one and without difference;—these are the Monists. There are others who think that culture includes racial characteristics, hence there will be difference of cultures;—these are the Dualists. But the Desabandhu was Dualist-cum-Monist. Culture is both one and many. Even if it is basically one, it is through the utmost variety and multiplicity that Unity expresses itself. As there are many trees in a garden and various flowers bloom on the different trees, in the same manner does human society develop different cultures. And as the garden is complete with its

many trees and flowers, so does a number of cultures make the Culture of Man. Thus every race developing its own culture also develops the culture of mankind. It is not possible to serve humanity at large by leaving aside or by neglecting one's own national culture. The fulfilment of the Desabandhu's nationalism was in international amity; but he did not try to develop a love of the world by doing away with love for his own land. But his nationalism did not lead him to exclusive ego-centricity.

In his love for the nation the Desabandhu would not forget Bengal, nor in loving Bengal would he forget the nation. He loved Bengal with all his life, but the love was not confined to the four corners of the province. I have it from his non-Bengalee colleagues that within a few days of their coming to know him, they were attracted by his great heart. The Maharashtrians loved and respected him with the same ardour as they did Tilak Maharaj, for the people of Maharashtra too received from him equal sympathy and affection.

The Desabandhu used to say that Bengal should be the vanguard of the Swaraj movement. In 1920, Bengal had lost her lead of the movement. But thanks to his untiring efforts and labour, in 1923 she won it back. With the death of the Desabandhu that lead has again been lost for Bengal. God alone knows when she will recover that position.

Another frequent statement of his was that if any Indian movement has to be worked in Bengal it must have the stamp of Bengal on it. If Satyagraha has to be launched in Bengal it must first be made suitable for the province. Those who have intimate

experience of actual conditions as they prevail cannot but endorse this opinion.

Every one has wondered at his strange influence over the masses and even with the so-called rich class. Some have tried to analyse it to get at its secret. Whenever he adopted a course of action he made it real. The mantra, "Either I succeed in my resolve or I perish", was engraved on his heart. Whatever path he would choose he would pursue it with unabated vehemence and none could stop him. Like the mounting sea waves, he would rush after his ideals, driven by his own force, drowning all dangers and difficulties. The wail of the dear ones, or the words of caution of his followers, was powerless to call him back. From where did he receive this Divine Power? Is this "Sakti" to be had by the true efforts, or "Sadhana"?

I have already said that in spite of being a devotee of "Sakti," the Desabandhu had never worshipped Power according to the Tantric rites. He was large-hearted and his aspirations were immense. "In the Great alone is bliss, what is small cannot give happiness"—this was, so to speak, his soul's message. Whatever he desired, he desired with all his life, mind and utterance. He would go mad over it. The utmost impediments were unable to frighten him or force him to withdraw. Like Napoleon Bonaparte who, seeing the Alps standing before him, had said, "There shall be no Alps," the Desabandhu also wholly ignored difficulties and obstructions. All those who know with what little capital he had launched on the publication of the "Forward," and of his attempts to capture the Council, will bear this out. If we ever

spoke of difficulties he would scold us as incorrigible pessimists. It had also become my task to bring up before him the risks and dangers; so he would often refer to us as "You young old men". Those who think that the Desabandhu was a moderate by conviction, but in the company of and under pressure from young people acted as an extremist, do not know his temperament and character. In fact he was ever-new and youthful,—he had an instinctive understanding of the hopes and aspirations of the youth. He could sympathize with them in their joys and sorrows. He liked the company of the young, and they too did not like to part company with him. It is for all this that I have elsewhere called him the King of the Youth.

His countrymen know of his sacrifices, his vast erudition, his tact, and like things,—there is little to be said on these scores.

I will end this letter after I have mentioned another reason for the extraordinary influence which he wielded. I have hinted at it earlier. It was the Desabandhu's constant experience that all his actions were part of his religious life. Thanks to Vaishnavism, he had succeeded in establishing a very fine synthesis between his ideal and his practical life, and his entire being was getting progressively saturated with this synthesis. Thanks to this, he came to look upon himself as merely an instrument of God's world-play. As a result of inner purity, which follows the pursuit of action without caring for results, man loses the awareness of the ego. And when the ego is transcended he becomes an instrument for the expression of the Divine Will. Then

ordinary human beings cannot withstand the energy and magnetism of a person so inspired. That is what had happened with the Desabandhu; towards the end of his life, even his fiercest opponents, when they were face to face with him, seemed to collapse. The conviction was also growing on his countrymen that wherever Mr. Das would be, victory would also be there as a matter of course.

People do not probably know how he had tried to get work done by people of so many different types. These will be known only when his inspiration will have borne fruit. The inspiration from ideals was ever his, and all those who came in contact with him were equally energized. Whatever the occasion, in life as in death, asleep or awake, the Desabandhu had one thought, one dream—service to the nation, and that service a step in his religious striving.

If in speaking of the Desabandhu's life we forget to mention another person,—his wife—then little will have been said. That goddess, embodying service and serenity, removed from public gaze, always stood by his side like a shadow. If we leave her out of account a good deal is then left out of the Desabandhu's life. She who, in the height of luxury, had never forgotten the Hindu ideals of feminine modesty, humility and service, who amidst the deep gloom of danger had never failed to render the support of a devoted wife, always holding up the ideal of faith and equanimity—in speaking of that goddess my language fails me. The Desabandhu was the King of the Youth. His devoted helpmate was their mother. After the

Desabandhu's death she is not merely Chiraranjan's mother, or of the young men only,—to-day she is Bengal's mother. The highest offering of the Bengalee heart is laid at her sacred feet.

* * * * *

In the course of his defence of Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore case, the Desabandhu had said in rich and powerful language :

“ He will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, the prophet of nationalism, and the lover of humanity. His words will be echoed and re-echoed ”

Do not these words apply, to-day, to the Desabandhu himself ?

TO THE STUDENTS

1

* * * *

If the students have made me their president at this conference with the conviction that I belong to them, I am indeed grateful. They need not adore me, for I am not an object of adoration. If I long for their love, it is because I long to be close to their hearts. If they have elected me as their president because they feel that I am their own, my coming here has not been in vain.

I love students. It would not be too much to say that I understand their inmost feelings, their joys and sorrows, their hopes and aspirations. I know from personal experience as a student what humiliation and repression fall to their lot. That is why I can realize quite well the dumb sufferings of the stricken student community.

A society which has neither respect nor esteem for the students, which treats them as only babies with affectionate care and tender counsels, can hardly expect them to grow into proper manhood. We are fond of paying lip-service to the ancient Sanskrit adage which goes: "Treat thy son as thine equal when he attains sixteen years of age". In practice, however, we go on treating our wards like so many infants even after they attain majority and pass all the degree examinations of the University. Our

society affords numerous examples where the parent treats a 40-year-old son as a baby. It is a tragedy that far from being ashamed of this, we glow with pride. How wretched is the life of a people of which a member is not supposed to have outgrown his infancy even in his late adulthood! No wonder it needs a Simon Commission to come from across the seas to shape the destinies of such a people !

One of the Hindu concepts of God is motherhood, and as Hindus we take pride in it; we also worship God in the image of Bāla Gopāla or Child Krishna. But have these concepts, I ask, helped at all the social elevation and emancipation of our country's womankind? Do the children or young men of our country get human treatment they fully deserve? Think of a conscientious answer to this question. If we had the courage to vindicate the honour of our women they would not have been the victims of all manner of cruel tyranny and humiliation which is continually inflicted upon them, especially in the districts of Bengal; nor would we tolerate such atrocities unashamed, as if watching a game like idle onlookers. Had not our country been totally bereft of manliness its menfolk would have been mad with rage at the dishonour done to the mothers and would have desperately rushed at once to the rescue, as brave Khurg Bāhādur Singh did.

Dear students, you probably hate the Englishmen, yet from them you must learn how to honour women. Our mothers and sisters live a helpless life in their own land, whereas in the midst of three hundred and thirty million of people a mere handful of Englishmen easily manage to defend the honour of their women. The

reason is not far to seek. Let any one offend or insult a single English woman and you will find the whole race rising in vengeance against the offender. Call to your mind the case of abduction of Miss Alice by a Pathan in the North-West Frontier Province and the resentment it caused.

How often we repeat the famous phrase from our scripture, "Mother and the Motherland should be honoured higher than Heaven", but are we at all devoted to them? We love, no doubt, our mothers to whom we directly owe our earthly existence. But is it enough? Ours should be love for woman-kind as a whole, for it is the symbol of motherhood. In women is epitomized our motherland, rich in fruitful bounties of nature and an age-long heritage of culture and spirits. They who have no respect for the mothers can hardly feel it for their motherland. All that is pure in life, and beautiful, all that is good, we see in the noble face of our motherland, in her splendour that wins our hearts and all. And unless we are devoted to her, we shall never attain complete manhood. Dear brethren, let us then offer our deepest homage of love and respect to our mothers and the motherland; let us valiantly guard the honour of our women. Manu, our ancient law-giver, said centuries ago : "Where women are honoured gods are happy. In a society where women are not respected all efforts come to naught. That family is foredoomed where women are in grief; but women, when they are free from grief and hardship, bring infinite prosperity to their people." Indeed, when India had not denied women their social position, she saw the advent of women-seers like Maitreyee and Gārgēe,

mathematicians and astronomers like Khanā and Lilāvatee, women heroes like Ahalyābāi and the Rānee of Jhānsi. Even in this "golden" Bengal of ours were seen women like Rānee Bhawāni and Debi-Chowdhurānee.

My dear comrades, you must be wondering why I introduce facts like these in a Conference of Students. Believe me, when I say that these words well up from the very depth of my aching heart. As a race, we have no hope for progress unless our womenfolk are mothers of brave sons, and that too will never be realized until at home and abroad we have improved the status of our future mothers. If the mothers must be strong and healthy we shall have to root out the baneful practice of child marriage. Women, if they so desire, shall have the option to remain life-long brahmachārins. The purdah system must be abolished and everything should be done for a complete education for them, intellectual as well as physical. Armed with dagger and lāthi, they must learn to defend themselves. In order that they may be economically independent, they should also have vocational education. Widows shall have the liberty to re-marry.

It rests with you, young men, to work out these ideals in our national life since the old reactionaries will always oppose them. Poor people ! they are blind and prejudiced and will never distinguish between religion and dead tradition. Compared with social revolution, it is often easier to organize a revolution of the political type. In the latter case, the fight is against a political enemy, and a country-wide sympathy irrespective of caste or creed is never wanting. True,

the poor political worker has to suffer occasional imprisonment or persecution; nevertheless he has the widest love and sympathy of his own people to inspire him. But the position of a social reformer is different. He has to fight his own people including even his intimate associates and relations. Abuse and insult is his portion at home, nor does any wider appreciation await him in public to recompense it. In this battle of conscience against his near and dear ones, as well as the revered elders, he must often be feeling as awkward as Arjuna did in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. This is indeed a veritable crusade in which strength and valour of the very highest kind are demanded of its soldiers. Spare no pains, dear comrades, as you prepare yourself for this crusade.

Our young men and students, as I have already said, have yet to secure their rightful place in society. From a visit to any free country of the world it becomes quite clear how dead and blind we are in our habits, and what a sad contrast do we present to the rest of the globe. The regard in which the students are held there by their parents, the University authorities, the policemen and Government officials, in a word, by the people as a whole, is not dreamt of here. In India, however, they are patted at home, they are instructed and punished alternately in schools and colleges, in society they are always treated as youngsters. The police and Government look upon them with suspicion. Could manhood ever thrive in an atmosphere so arid and stifling? While the students in the free states, in an open-air atmosphere of mutual love and respect, grow up into self-reliant responsible citizens, we in our country very easily manage to gag

the God in them. I have yet to conceive of a charge against our society more damning than this.

It is encouraging, however, to find the students awake. They have not depended upon any outside help but have come to their own rescue. It is this creative urge in them, an urge to bring about a new social order, that has unleashed itself in a country-wide student upheaval. I have every hope and confidence in our students that by dint of untiring zeal, fortitude, as well as sacrifice, they, like those in the free countries, will one day come to their own, and will ultimately be loved and respected by their compatriots.

Nothing deters progress so much as misleading ideals. Even for our misdeeds we have some moral principle or other to shield us. The students in recent times often delude themselves with such ideals and indulge in wrong practices. Take for instance the popular saying "Devotion to studies is a student's tapasyā," and many of us, in pursuance of this maxim, dissuade students from all active national programmes. But how on earth could mere study of books or passing of examinations be accepted as tapasyā or the life-mission of human beings? These may occasionally lead the boys to gold medals, or fat salaries, but never to a complete manhood. True, one may find in books thoughts and ideas of the very highest type, but would that directly shape his character until he imbibes and assimilates them and finally translates them into action? To realize any truth in life we must take recourse to deepest meditation or tapasyā; and when out of it truth gradually permeates itself through our whole being, we have a complete transformation, or re-birth so to speak. The true meaning and purpose

of life is at last revealed, and in that new light from within we perhaps have to adopt a course of life wholly unprecedented. Such an inspiration is for them alone who are still young and have endless fire and zest in them along with wide imagination and a selfless spirit. They alone can be reckless and are able to make sacrifices at the altar of high thoughts and noble ideals. It is propitious, as we all know, to worship the Goddess in red flowers while they are still fresh. You too, my dearest brethren, are still young and fresh, radiant with health, hope and aspiration. The time would never be more propitious than this to offer your immaculate souls at the feet of what may be regarded as life's highest ideal.

What kind of ideal do you think is that, which as a perennial source of joy and inspiration gives men the taste for immortality, transforming them thereby into nobler beings? Don't you be deluding yourself with the idea that great men were all born as great and needed no devoted effort to make such. They were born, no doubt, with a possibility for the same, yet without active dedication to the noble cause they would have remained in the dark and would never have been acclaimed in the public as great. You just analyse the lives of the world's greatest men and you shall find that at the root of their success lies diligence, perseverance and industry of the rarest type. Apply yourself with an equal effort and industry and you too shall be great in time. The endless energy in you lies like smouldering fire; once you quicken yourself with diligent sādhanā, the fire will immediately get glowing, as bright as a million suns, to dazzle the whole world.

I am sure, you all remember the famous New Year Song of Rabindranath; therein you have the right spirit to inspire you :

O India, on this day of New Year,
listen to thy poet's song :
We bring offerings to thy feet
with hearts full of a new joy ;
We bring the strength of our bodies,
the deepest devotion of our souls ;
Our faith, the sincerest ; our life and all ;
we bring sacrifice unstinted and pure.

Unreservedly in this manner we should pledge ourselves to the motherland, and that at the very start of our student life. In that formative period of our life we must be disciplined brahmachārins, and should have an all-round education, so that we may be rich both physically and mentally, and may be able to give those riches away. What gift on earth could one possibly make who was himself poor and beggarly ! Hence, while a student, we shall have to build up a strong body and character as well as intellect. In other words, it must be a threefold development of physique, intellect and emotion, culminating in a balanced specimen of manhood.

Once you accept this as the ideal of student life you can easily realize that it will be ridiculous to run after such petty things as University degrees and gold medals. I pity the poor wretch who passes in our schools and colleges for a "good boy." Book-worm as he is, he has practically no life beyond his textbooks and the examination halls. What a miserable contrast do they present to such a reckless truant as Robert Clive ! Parents and others may forsake him, nevertheless it is a boy of his type who, in course of

his adventurous quest for the unknown, conquers unawares an empire for his own people. What the "goodies" of England neither did nor could ever have achieved in their whole life was accomplished by this bad boy of a Clive. And since the English people know how to appreciate and admire a real hero they had this "bad boy" raised to peerage. This reckless Robert closed his life as Lord Clive.

England and other advanced nations of the world have two very rare qualities at the root of all their progress. Firstly, they have a deep love for their own country; secondly, they have a real spirit of adventure. They never hesitate to leave the beaten track for the new, their home for the wider world. At the call of life they can give up time-worn habits and tradition. It is because of this desperate dynamism or, to use the poet's phrase, this "thirst for far-away things" that the English people have made progress, whereas we who lack this are immersed in oblivion.

But we also had our glorious past when our ancestors would cross the raging seas and would colonize in distant lands having commerce with the people there in merchandise, and exchanging knowledge and culture. Those were the days of India's self-expansion and progress. Then followed the days of slumber when we imprisoned ourselves within the narrow, domestic walls of our own. Now, once more we seem to feel the throb of a new life in our pulse—the sleeper seems to be waking up. There are signs of new awakening visible all around. Once again we are curious, and have earnestly set out to win knowledge and wisdom from outside. We are keen at the same time to give to the world at large whatever

treasure we may have worth the name. Our poet Tagore has rightly sung :

I shall shatter the stone wall around me
pouring myself out in tender sympathy;
I shall deluge the world
with my frenzied song.
From peak to peak,
and from hill to hill,
I shall be leaping forth like a streamlet,
clapping and laughing all the while.
Like a flowing river
I shall carry new message,
From one land to another
Crooning them from heart to heart,
Like secret words of love.

Individually we Indians are inferior to none in this world, even if we were not superior to them in many respects. Despite the fact that we are helpless slaves, many of our poets and littérateurs, artists and scientists, merchants and men of industry, athletes, sportsmen and soldiers have established their reputation internationally, and shine bright against the world background. But they are the stalwarts in their respective field; as a nation we still belong to the backwater. Once we have provided education for the mass and have helped them develop into full men we shall easily march ahead of all the nations of the world. It is for our educated youths to take up this programme of a country-wide awakening. But before that we ourselves need to be inspired with the deepest patriotic feelings without which we shall never belong to the common folk. To become truly patriotic we must keep clear of all narrownesses that tend to stifle the emotions and the intellect; and this freedom of thought and emotion our young men should begin to cultivate even while they are students.

One must shatter to pieces all the shackles of life before one can attain proper manhood. We must boldly raise a protest against all injustice and oppression and should try desperately to check them. In the modern age, power and energy we need for national freedom and self-preservation has to be won by means of Karmayoga, or devotion to service of a selfless kind. This we may attain not through austere practices in the solitude of deep forests or inaccessible mountain recesses, but through battles fought in the open arena of life. To allow tyranny to be perpetrated without opposition is to insult your own manhood as well as that of the person tyrannized. If, while resisting a tyrant, you risked your life and courted insult and imprisonment, that would be an honour for your manhood. It is because he boldly defended the Indian motherhood that Khurg Bāhādur Singh, a mere student from amongst you, has been raised to the position of a national hero. A thousand "gold medallists" of the kind that come out of our Universities every year, put together, would never make, I am sure, one single Khurg Bāhādur.

In schools or colleges, at home or abroad, where-soever you come across dishonesty, injustice or tyranny face it and resist it boldly. Soon you will find that you are already a national hero, and that the life's tide has turned you, for all times to come, towards truth, transforming your very existence so to speak to something nobler than it is. Believe me, whatever boldness or strength I may have in me to call my own, I have achieved in this manner.

One word more and I shall have done with this speech. Let the students of India be united and

organized. They must be made to realize that they are the nation's heirs; they shall have to make their country independent, for they have in them the necessary strength and energy. They must achieve confidence, for nothing great can be attained unless one has faith in one's own self and in one's own people. Deep is my faith and regard for the youths and students of our country. I love them with all my heart and I feel that they too love me in return. Dear friends, even if you are not conscious of it, I know what infinite power lies latent within you. Once you have emerged out of this oblivion and regained self-confidence lost so long, you will at once conquer death and will achieve success undreamt of.

I have not said anything in my present address about the student movement outside India, and that quite intentionally.

There is no end of books and journals to make all those particulars available to you, and I have not come all this distance to inflict a lesson upon you as a schoolmaster. I am here to offer to you my sincerest feelings and the fruits of experience that I have gathered from life.

May you adopt all measures to develop an "esprit de corps" amongst yourselves. Compose your own songs for special occasions, bring out periodicals and create literature of your own, design flags and banners for the institutions and organizations you may have. Volunteer Corps built on a new model, such as had been organized during the Calcutta Congress of 1929, should be founded among the students. Such organizations will make them brave and hardy and train them up in military discipline. They will

gradually develop a solidarity amongst themselves, cemented by love and mutual co-operation which will ultimately produce what might be termed "class patriotism." These days, our students badly need this type of patriotism. From one end of India to another, students shall have to be linked up in spirit so that no obstruction on earth would ever be strong enough to stand in their way. Thus awakened, they would break the bonds of servitude for their people and bring into being an India independent and free, having an honoured place amongst the great nations of the world.

My dear brethren, I have finished at last. Only let me add that I am still a student as much as I had been before. I belong therefore to your own community. Please accept my sincerest love and regard for you all.*

*The above Presidential address originally written in Bengali was sent to the Surma Valley Student Conference, Sylhet held in April 1929 (13 Vaisakh, 1336 BS) Owing to unavoidable circumstances, Subhas Chandra could not attend the conference personally

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Friends, you know best why you have invited me today to this conference of students. What has encouraged and induced me to attend it is the conviction in me that I too am a student like you. Still do I study in all earnest the Jivan-Veda or the Book of Life and add to my store of knowledge, experiences to be had directly from an impact with the stern realities of the world.

Individuals as well as nations have some religion or ideal of their own. They mould themselves gradually according to that ideal. Their only aim in life is to realize that ideal without which they seem to be consumed by a feeling of futility. An ideal, even within the bounds of time and space, takes more than a day, or a year to evolve fully. While an individual takes many a year to realize his ideal, a nation takes generations for the same purpose. That is why ideals are conceived by our leaders as dynamic and vital forces and not as so many dead and inert concepts.

We do not always understand the ideal that has been trying to unfold itself in our social life for these last hundred years or so. Only they who have an insight and can probe deep into things may feel its course underneath the diverse currents and cross-currents of outward events. This is called "the ideal

of the age." Once you have realized this, your path and the path-finder are in no time found. But since in most cases we fail to grasp this idea we are led astray by false leaders. Students, if you really desire to mould your lives in the best sense then you must guard yourselves against the wrong guidance of imperfect teachers, and should try to be self-possessed so as to discover the right ideal for yourself.

The ideal that some fifteen years ago inspired the student community of Bengal was that of Swami Vivekānanda. Under its influence the then young Bengal enthusiastically pursued a path of rigid moral discipline in order to eradicate all the narrow passions and reach out for a life spiritually pure and enlightened. At the root of all social and national awakening lies the awakening of the individual. Swami Vivekānanda would, therefore, always say, "man-making is my mission." But in his emphasis on "man" the Swamiji did not wholly overlook the nation. He was not a believer of Sanyāsa, or renunciation, of the inactive type, or what lethargic fatalism produced. The Swamiji had pitched his faith on the rapprochement of the diverse religious creeds that Sree Ramakrishna Paramhansa had discovered in his spiritual life, and that faith was to be the bed-rock of India's future nationalism. Without this wonderful brotherhood of religions and the spirit of tolerance we could never have built up our nationalism in this land of diversity that India is.

Long before the advent of Swami Vivekānanda we had Raja Rammohan Roy, the father of Indian Renaissance as our guide-philosopher. Resolutely he had engaged himself in dispelling all the blind forces

and superstitions that passed for religion in our society and tended to ruin it. He had the burning faith in him that, if the deeper truths of Vedānta could be propagated, our people would discard what was superficial in religion and would once again be united under the universal faith of one true religion. But to bring about a revolution in the realm of religion one must begin in the sphere of thought, and with that end in view the Raja desired to quicken our brains with all the sciences and philosophies of the West. This revolution in the thought-world, started so ably by Rammohan, spread in later days in the society at large. With the arrival of Keshub Chandra Sen reform activities of a social kind came very fast into vogue. There was the new message of the Brāhmo-Samāj and as a result there were signs of new life all over the country. In course of time there was fresh awakening among the Hindus themselves, and the Brāhmo-Samāj became gradually cut off losing its influence on the society at large.

Our urge for freedom had found its natural vent in diverse movements since the days of Raja Rammohan. In the nineteenth century it had expressed itself only in intellectual and social sphere but not in the political. Slaves as they were, the Indians were still immersed in deep slumber and implicitly believed that the conquest of India by the British was a divine dispensation. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, and during the beginning of the twentieth, we at last had the glimpse of complete freedom in the thoughts and ideas of Ramakrishna and Vivekānanda. "Freedom, freedom is the song of the soul"—when in these words the Swamiji poured out

his heart the whole nation was drunk to intoxication. In every effort and action, in all his words and speeches, this truth he preached throughout his life. The Swamiji, on the one hand, wanted his people to free themselves from all bondage in order that they might attain real manhood, on the other hand, in his preachings of a world-brotherhood of religions he laid the foundation of Indian nationalism. Rammohan had believed that by refuting idol-worship and having it replaced by the worship of the one formless God of the Vedānta he would be able to unite his countrymen on a universal platform. The Brāhmo-Samāj had followed in his steps only to discover that the breach between them and the Hindu Society had increased. Then came Ramakrishna and Vivekānanda with their views based on forms of qualified monism—Visistāwaitabāda or Dwaitādwaitabāda, and a catholic spirit of tolerance grew, by means of which attempts were made to link the people up into a united nation.

The bold and comprehensive vision of freedom that we had discovered in Vivekānanda did not enter the field of politics during his time. It was from the lips of Aurobindo Ghose that we heard of political freedom for the first time. When in his paper, "Bande-Mataram," Aurobindo wrote, "We want complete autonomy free from British control," our young aspirants after freedom felt that at last they had one who stood closest to their hearts. Emotional as they were they dreamt deeply of a free India. The following words of Aurobindo that he had once said in one of the open lawns of Calcutta still ring in my ears :

“ I should like to see some of you becoming great; great, not for your own sake, but to make India great—so that she may stand up with head erect among the free nations of the world.”

Thus inspired with the ideal of complete independence we refused to take notice of the raging tempest and rushed impetuously along the stormy road of revolution.

Then came the year 1921. With his message of non-co-operation we heard Mahatma Gandhi say that, unless we send our call to the masses and inspire them with the desire for freedom Swaraj will never be attained. The use of non-co-operation as a weapon was not new to Bengal or India. Till recently the people of Jessore had defended themselves with its help against the brutality of the indigo-planters. What was really new in the field of Indian politics was the Mahatma's message in respect of the masses. This message became more and more clear in the life of Desabandhu Chittaranjan Das. In his speech at Lahore he openly declared that the Swaraj he wanted to achieve was for the people as a whole and not for a handful of selected few. “ Swaraj for the masses ”—that was the goal he announced before his countrymen at the All-India Conference at Lahore.

Another great conception bequeathed to us by Desabandhu was that, human life, be it national or individual, was an organic whole. It could not be split into pieces. When there is awakening in the life of a man it is an awakening of his whole being, and signs of a new life are visible in every sphere of his existence. Man and the world he lives in have an inherent diversity of their own, effacement of which

would be tantamount to death or annihilation. An individual or a nation should seek development through this diversity. The unity in diversity that in our age Ramakrishna and Vivekānanda had achieved in the spiritual sphere was well attempted if not fully achieved in our national as well as political life by the Desabandhu. He was a believer in "The Conflict of Cultures"* as much as in their "Union"—in a word he believed in the Federation of Cultures; and in spite of his deep faith in the basic unity of India he never undervalued the distinctiveness of Bengal. Indeed in the field of Indian politics the Desabandhu was in favour of a Federal State rather than a centralized one.

This ideal of an all-round development, in which Desabandhu Chittaranjan Das had such an abiding faith, is the ideal of our age. Before it can be realized we must have a vision, as comprehensive as possible, of freedom. Unless one's vision is clear and perfect one would never succeed in one's attempts in the practical field. We must tell to-day the people of India, especially her youths, that in the free India that we dream of, both are free—the individual as well as the society; men are free there from the obligations of the state, the society and the moneyed interest. Our mission is to rescue our people, nay mankind, from the "triple-fire", as the yogis would say,—the fire of the political, the social as well as the economic life.

There are people who imagine that they can make their country politically free leaving its old social order untouched, while there are others who dream of

* Indirectly refers to "Śikshār Birodh", a well-known article in Bengali by the novelist Saratchandra Chatterji written in 1921 in reply to Rabindranath's famous article "Śikshār Milan" (The Union of Cultures).

breaking all the social bounds without working up any revolution in the political sphere. Both these set of people suffer from incomplete vision. The desire of a nation for freedom, once aroused, bursts forth in all the varied sides of its life as sure as the improved health in a man reveals itself in the glowing grace of his various limbs. While a nation struggles to free itself from all the bonds that keep it in slavery, it is futile to cry halt and say, "Thus far and no further." In a society as ugly and tattered as ours, all the people must be restless and mad for freedom before they can attain complete independence. But so long as social repression and economic inequality weighed heavy on these people the idea of political independence could not inspire them. How could they, who felt bitterly the sting of social and economic exploitation, respond to the call of political freedom unless they were assured of freedom from these exploitations?

Students, I have come here to-day to impress it on you as strongly as I can that, the "religion" of the age in which you are born is the faith in a complete and comprehensive independence. The people of India want to be born and bred, as well as to die, in a free land and in a free atmosphere. How long in India will "men remain imprisoned in their own country and women in their own homes"? How long, to our shame, would we tolerate the description of our women-folk as so many "moving baggages" and "fancy dolls"?

There are people who are scared by the word independence. The very thought of political freedom brings to their minds dreadful sights of gallows and streams of blood, and social liberty amounts to them

to be lawless libertinism. But as for me, I am not afraid of this lawlessness, because I have the deepest faith in the Divine in man as well as in his basic humanity. If there is any truth in our conception of God and man, men could never eternally run astray. Independence, freshly achieved, might intoxicate us for a brief while and might even put every one of us off his head, but, I am confident, in no time we shall regain our mental balance. Our right to become independent includes also our right to learn by making mistakes. Hence march ahead along the road to independence and let not the dark picture of an imaginary chaos frighten you. Keep your faith firm in humanity that is in you, and endlessly strive to attain manliness.

The women, the so-called depressed classes, the labourers and cultivators—these are the three very large parts of our people that are practically lifeless and idle. Send to them your inspiring call and make them conscious of their fundamental human rights. Tell them to arise, awake and be continually striving so that they may get back the rights that have been lost.

You students and youths of our country, be devout aspirants, all of you, after complete independence. Charge yourself with the task of awakening your own people, for the future India is for you. Every one of you has a perennial source of boundless energy in you. Adopt all means to keep up that energy ever new and fresh and infuse that into others. Let the whole nation be initiated by you in the new message of freedom and restored to animation. For all the time during which India has had no independence, she has abandoned what might be called the

“Collective Sādhana” and has been straining all her nerves for a spiritual development that is of the individual. As a result we have had, without doubt, the advent of hundreds of great men, yet the nation as a whole has lived under conditions most wretched and miserable. To rescue it from this degradation the very ideal, and also its practice must be altered. We have to realize, all of us, that in a national scheme, the individual, as apart from its people, has no importance whatsoever.

Hosts of our people have been cultivating valuable knowledge of various categories even through generations. But that valued culture could never come to be owned by the people at large. From now it should be disseminated among them so that they may gradually step into its possession. From now it should be made clear to all that in the New India that we are going to found, everybody will have equal rights and opportunities, irrespective of his caste or creed. The day the people of our country clearly grasp this, they would be restless and mad for freedom.

Let me say a few more words before I finish. We need infusion of fresh blood since our people's blood has been getting thinner. Read once again the history of India and you will discover occasions without number when there was admixture of blood among its people. It was due to this that our nation could rally repeatedly in the face of death and get to fresh life. They who have a suspicion with regard to cross-breeding are hopelessly ignorant, I must say, of our racial history as well as of the principles of anthropology. Henceforth we should encourage intermixing of blood in our society by lending support to cases of

inter-caste marriage. Just now we need not have foreign blood, for inter-caste marriage having been long prohibited in our society, if it could once again be introduced, I believe, there would be enough admixture of blood amongst the people to bring back our lost vitality.

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Brethren, allow me now to conclude my speech. Go from village to village preaching the message of equality and independence. "Hold aloft before the people's eyes the picture of free India that I have painted for you in this speech of mine. Once you can give them a foretaste of independence they will madly run after it. But to start with, taste it you must for yourselves. Light the torch of freedom in your hearts, and with that flaming torch go from door to door of your countrymen. Like the students and youths of China and Russia you shall have to march visiting the peasants and workers in their thatched cottages and dirty hovels for dwelling places, and wake them all up. Pay a visit to them too who are the mothers. Sources of all energy as they are, they have now been reduced to utter helplessness. Wake them up with the words of the poet :

"Defend thine honour, mother,

With the unsheath'd sword of thine own."

Lastly, go in batches to the neglected people of the depressed community and say, "Brethren, at long last we are here at your doors to inspire you with a new message of freedom and to make you conscious of the fundamental rights of human life. Wake up and arise, for you too have a right to enjoy this world exploited so long only by its brave sons."

Could you not shoulder these responsibilities? Of course you could. I have come here to inspire you onward, for surely success would be yours. May you realize your mission and attain the goal of your life, —may India be once again free.*

*Presidential address delivered at the Hooghly District Students' Conference on the 21st July, 1929.

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Dear brothers and sisters of the Punjab, let me thank you from the very bottom of my heart for the warm reception you have accorded to me on the occasion of my first visit to this hallowed land of the five rivers. I am conscious that I do not deserve this cordiality and honour, and therefore I earnestly pray that I may become worthy of them.

You invited me to come all the distance from Calcutta to express my views to you. I am here in response to that call. But of all men why does this choice fall on me? Was it only with the purpose of helping two of the Indian provinces of the east and the west meet, so that they might jointly arrive at a solution of their common problem, or because the Punjab, as the last province to be occupied by the British, desired help and co-operation from Bengal, the first the British to occupy in India? Or was it because we, who belonged to these two provinces, were inspired by one common thought and aspiration?

It is an irony of fate that a student expelled like me from one of the universities of India should at last be addressing at Lahore the students of another university. But men and ideas of every new variety seem to drop these days almost from heaven and occupy prominent positions, and it is no wonder that

the older folk fret and foam, and dub their age as ill-fated. As for you, it will not be difficult to anticipate the topic of today's speech provided my antecedents were known to you when you invited me to this conference.

Friends, I have a very deep admiration for the Punjab, especially for its young men, and I hope to be pardoned by you if I open my address with a reference to that. All the pains you took for our great martyr Jatindranath Das* and his fellow-prisoners from Bengal, the arrangements you made for their defence while they were under trial, the sympathy you expressed during their hunger-strike, the profound love and respect that you showed them in life and in death, have deeply touched the hearts of the people of Bengal. Many of you from the Punjab had accompanied the remains of Jatindranath right down to Calcutta. As a race we are emotional, and this largeness of heart shown by you has therefore aroused a unique feeling of nearness between us. Bengal, I can assure you, will never forget the loving care and service it received from the people of the Punjab in its days of dire distress.

While in Calcutta, your eminent leader, Dr. Alam, had referred to Jatindranath and remarked that, life and death of the young martyr had wonderfully resembled the reverse courses of the sun and the moon. While he lived he moved from Calcutta to Lahore, and after his death he glided back from there to Calcutta.

* Better known as Jatin Das, the MacSweeney of India, who laid his body down in the Lahore prison after sixty-three days of a self-imposed fast.

Struck although by death, his body reached Calcutta as a symbol of whatever is sacred, great and eternal in mankind, and not as a mere perishable corpse. Jatin Das is not dead, he shines bright as a star in the firmament of our national life, directing the course of the future generations, he is immortalized in his suffering and self-sacrifice. He is now a flaming inspiration in the hearts of all, sacred in human history and great in the realm of human thoughts and ideas. By means of his unique self-sacrifice he has not only awakened the inmost soul of India but also forged an unbreakable link between its two distant provinces.

The more we are nearing independence, our life's cup is filling to the brim with pain and suffering. As the political power is gradually wrested from their hands our rulers naturally become impatient and heartless. No wonder, if one day they put off their disguise of a civilized government and release the brute in them in all its fury. The Punjab and Bengal are at present the most tyrannized of all provinces. This is indeed a matter of joy and pride, for in our suffering we are having the best training for Swaraj. The brave spirit of heroes like Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt can never be suppressed, rather they thrive in repression. Hence all welcome to repression and tyranny, and as they arrive we shall turn them to our advantage.

Perhaps it is not known to you to what great extent the Bengali literature has been enriched by adopting tales and narratives from the old history of the Punjab, and how far that has enlarged the domain of knowledge of the reading Bengal. Tagore and several other well-known poets of our province have

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sung many a heroic tale of the Punjab, and the names of the heroes of them are now almost household words. The words and advice of your Sādhus and saints are quite current in our language bringing solace and peace to the folks of Bengal. And not merely in the intellectual and spiritual field, we are united even in the field of politics. Not only in the prisons of India, a Bengalee pilgrim treading the path of freedom often meets a pilgrim from the Punjab, also in the distant prisons of Burma as well as of the isles of the Andamans.

Friends, I do not propose to offer any excuse to you before entering into a discussion of politics, even if it be a full-length discussion. There are men in our country, some of them quite eminent, who believed that a subject nation can have no politics, and that its students should never join the political movement. As for me, I firmly believe that an enslaved people should have no other engagement than politics. Belonging as we do to a country under foreign domination, for every problem we try to solve we have to knock our heads against some adverse political situation, which indeed has caused it. Desabandhu Chittaranjan Das used to say that, human life being an indivisible organic whole, it was impossible to draw a line of demarcation between its politics and economics, or between these two on the one side and education on the other. You can never consider the life of a people piecemeal. All its different aspects are interrelated, and problems interlinked. This being the truth, it may be clearly realized that the absence of political freedom is the root cause of all the evils and shortcomings of a subject nation. And therefore the

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problem which the student community cannot afford to overlook is the one of finding for its people the ways and means of securing political freedom.

I can hardly understand why of all the national endeavours politics are marked out and tabooed. One could understand if all the various types of national activities were banned, but what rhyme or reason could there be in picking out politics from amongst them for this purpose? If all the problems of a subject nation boil down to one major problem, I mean the political problem, then all its national activities would in the final analysis amount to political activity. In no free country politics is ever banned; students, on the contrary, are encouraged to join it, for there the people know that the future national leaders and statesmen must come out of the student community. If the students in India take no active part in politics wherefrom would we recruit our workers and how could we possibly train them up? Neither could we deny that active political life helped the development of the character and personality of a person. You can never build up your character through inactive meditation in the solitude; you must on the contrary keep yourself engaged in some sort of work, be that political, social or artistic. It is high time the universities gave up their beaten-track policy of turning out book-worms or so-called "good boys" as well as docile office clerks; they should try to build up the right type of young men who would earn fame by bringing honour to their motherland in all the spheres of its life.

It augurs well of our age to find the students organizing themselves all over India in the proper

manner. In my view, this movement is nothing but a part of the wider youth movement of the country. There is a gulf of difference between student conferences of today and those held ten years ago. In those days such conferences were held under the auspices of Government, and on their gates would be written—"Ye who enter here abandon all talks on politics." In a way these conferences resembled very much the sessions of the Indian National Congress of those days, for like the latter, a student conference would also open with a resolution expressing their loyalty to the Crown. In either field, we have steadily outgrown the old. Now we are far more free and independent in our thoughts and discussions than we used to be.

The student movement of these days is no more an aimless adventure of a group of irresponsible young men and women. It is a movement of those who have enough strength and sense of responsibility in them to build up their character and personality so that in the end they may plan and organize, as perfectly as is humanly possible, all our national activities. To make it a success the students may, or rather should, adopt a programme twofold in nature. Firstly, they should try to solve the problems which specifically affect the student community, and should try to infuse a new life into their community which should work for developing all the three sides,—physical, mental and moral. Secondly, they should be guided so as to prepare for the coming struggle, since they are the future citizens of India. Before they entered this life they must have some idea of the problems and obstructions which awaited them there.

The youth movement in its modern form is characterized by a restlessness, an impatience of the existing state of things and a strong desire to establish a new and improved type of social order. A deep sense of responsibility and self-confidence is at the root of this movement. Youths of our country can no longer rest satisfied leaving all their burden on the shoulders of their elders. They feel it with all their heart that the country and its future depend wholly on them and therefore they feel it to be their duty to take up the burden themselves, and be prepared for the struggles necessary for achieving success. It is this ideal that inspires the student movement which, as I have already said, is only a part and parcel of the country-wide youth movement.

Under ordinary circumstances, the first part of the twofold programme suggested above would not perhaps incur the displeasure of the Government, but the second part, I am afraid, will hardly win their approval. As for me, it will neither be proper nor desirable to chalk out on behalf of the students the details of the first part of the programme. That detail will no doubt depend much on the nature of their specific and local needs and what arrangements have been made by the different educational authorities and institutions to meet those needs. Every student should possess a strong and healthy physique, a character of an unimpeachable kind, a love for knowledge and wisdom and an ideal robust and soaring to the highest point. If the existing educational system does not suit their purpose they will have to make their own arrangements. They would be lucky if they have the support of the senior members of the families they

belong to, but if there is opposition to their programme, they must march on ignoring all opposition. Your life belongs to you and the ultimate responsibility to improve and develop it also rests with none else but you.

In this connection I would like to suggest one thing. The different student associations in my opinion can serve the community immensely if each of them would start a co-operative swadeshi store. If the students can manage the stores well, it will serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, they will get for their use the swadeshi things very cheap, and the purchases would add impetus to the various local crafts and cottage industries. On the other hand, they will have first-hand experience in running a co-operative business, along with an opportunity to utilize its profits for the good of their community. Indeed, for the welfare of students, organizations and institutions of various types must be founded, such as clubs and associations for physical culture, debating societies and study circles, libraries and magazine sections, as well as music clubs, and lastly social service leagues of different types.

The second part of the programme suggested above is perhaps more important than the first, for it proposes to train the students up into future citizens. This training should be carried out through intellectual as well as physical activities. We shall have to hold up before the students the picture of an ideal human society which would inspire them to act for the realization of that ideal. Along with this we must suggest to them a line of action which they will be expected to pursue as far as practicable. On their

way, they are likely to meet with repeated opposition from the powers that be. If ill luck would bring them to such a pass, there would be no way left open to them but to be bold and self-reliant and prepare in thought and action for the inevitable.

Before I express my personal views regarding the ideal which every one of us should cherish, let me point out one thing more. We, the people of Asia, feel deep agony and insult, on account of our continent being under the feet of Europe. But it would be wrong if this leads us to believe that Asia had always been lorded over by Europe. History bears evidence to the fact that in the ancient days people from Asia had conquered wide regions and established an empire in Europe. Those were the days when the name of our continent had struck terror at the hearts of the people of Europe. Now the days might have changed, but why lose heart and be depressed for this turn of the tide? Asia is once again preparing to break the shackles, and the day is approaching when she, in full radiance of her power and glory, would re-occupy her place of honour in the independent world.

Over-active and fussy as they are, the people of the West often denounce the ancient people of the East as "old fossil," exactly as they had till recently denounced the Turkish people as "the sick man of Europe." But such a denouncement holds justified neither for Turkey nor for Asia. Today the whole of the Eastern continent appears to be in the throes of a new awakening. Everywhere there are signs of a progressive change and a clash with the old social order. The East may, as long as it chooses, stay inert like a "fossil," but once quickened to the changing

circumstances it would march miles ahead of the West. Indications are clear enough that Asia is now passing through that phase.

It is often asked, whether this restlessness which we see all over Asia, in India in particular, really indicates a new life, or is it merely the effect of a skin-deep excitement? I am of the opinion that creativeness is the sure test of life, and since the present movement is found paving new ways along which its overflowing urge for diverse creative experiments are being directed, verily it indicates a new awakening amongst our people—an awakening which has actually stirred our being to the very depth.

In India we are being tossed in a whirlpool of new ideas; innumerable are the currents and cross-currents. In the midst of this violent convulsion in the realm of ideas, amounting almost to a chaos, it is very difficult for an ordinary man to choose between right and wrong, or between good and evil. But if we resolve to revive the latent power of our people now almost lost, and direct it towards a definite objective, we must lose no time in clearing up our conception of the final goal and the means to attain it.

India has travelled across the dark and dreary period of its history and has left it behind. She has been now making a headway towards a new culture and civilization. The question whether she would die a natural death like Phœnicia and Babylon has been answered, for she has already rescued herself from the ravages of time. But before we are fully revived we shall have to revolutionize our old thoughts and ideas and we must infuse new blood into our race. If we but put any faith in the verdict of history, or in the

words of the leading thinkers of the world, we cannot but admit that these were the only means by which had been revitalized the decaying peoples in the past. You may read in history about the rise and fall of civilizations and may try to trace out for yourself the principles that governed it. Once you have known that, you can safely advise your people and tell them which path they should adopt, so that they may rebuild themselves on progressive lines and may attain strength and power they need.

To inspire a revolution in the realm of thought we must hold an ideal before the eyes of the people, which would instantly electrify life, and energy will issue with extreme keenness. What else could that ideal be than the ideal of independence? But the ideal of independence is never the same in all minds. Even in our country, the word independence is gradually changing its connotation. For me, it signifies independence for all—for the society, as well as the individual, for man as well as woman, for the rich as well as the poor; and implies not merely political freedom, but an equal distribution of wealth, removal of caste differences and social injustice, and abolition of all communal narrownesses and bigotry. Irrational people may regard this ideal as absurd, yet nothing less than this could ever appease the hunger of our souls.

The diverse channels along which the life of a people may possibly seek expression are like so many aspects of its independence. We had often viewed independence in only one or other of these aspects, and it took long years before we could broaden that narrow outlook and grasp the meaning of independence in its widest implication. If we are not selfish and can love

freedom for freedom's sake, it is high time we realized that true freedom does not consist in the freedom of an individual, but in the freedom of the whole community, from all conceivable forms of bondage. That is the ideal for this age, and I fill my heart with the picture of an India free in all sides of her life. The only way to attain freedom is to think and feel like a free man. Let, therefore, the full flood of the spirit of revolution fill our hearts, and the desire for freedom like blood-red wine run through our veins. Once we are wide awake with a desire for independence an endless stream of energy will course through us. Cowardly words of caution will no more be a discouragement for us, and the trumpet call of truth and action will inspire us, and lead us straight to the goal.

Friends, I have tried to explain to you my feelings and thoughts about the purpose of the human life that direct and sustain me in all my undertakings. I do not know whether you would like all this or not. But it is my firm conviction that the one and only purpose of life is to be free from all bondages. The dominating tune in the symphony of life is its ardent desire for freedom. Even the first cry of a new-born baby is a cry of revolt against the bondage of life. Kindle this keen desire for freedom in you as well as in your countrymen, and you will find in no time that India is free.

India shall be independent, there is no room for doubt in that. It will happen as inevitably as the day follows the night. There is no power on earth which can keep India in bondage any longer. But, come, let us in the meanwhile build up a dream-picture of India

as glorious and great as to inspire sacrifice, if need be, of whatever we call our own, in this life. I have already placed before you the picture of India which is in my dream. Let this India, free and independent, send its message in every direction.

I would like to say it definitely that India has a message, and that she has survived through the centuries that she might give her message to the world. India indeed has something new to offer in every sphere of culture and civilization of the world. Even in her dependence and degradation the contribution she has made is not negligible. Imagine, therefore, how great and precious that contribution could be if she had the liberty to develop along paths of her own.

There may be a few persons of standing in our country who would refuse to accept the interpretation of independence or freedom given here. That we are unable to convince them is regrettable to the extreme; yet we cannot afford to give up this ideal of ours which is based on truth, justice and equity. If they do not respond to our call, we must move forward, few though we are. But, I feel sure, there will be millions who would join us in this march to freedom. No truce is possible in a battle against injustice, inequality and servitude.

It is high time the lovers of freedom in our country organized and marshalled themselves into an army for the struggle for independence. But this will not be their only work; they will also send out missionaries who will carry the message of freedom to all corners of the country. Let us, from amongst ourselves, recruit and organize this army of soldiers and missionaries. Our scheme of work must include

work of propaganda both extensive and intensive, as well as the work of organizing a country-wide volunteer corps. Our missionaries will preach the new message among peasants and industrial workers of our country. They will infuse new life into our youths and their various organizations. And last but not the least, they will awaken all the women-folk of the land, for the time has come when women must stand by the side of men with equal rights, social as well as political.

Dear friends, many of you must be preparing during these days to become members of the Indian National Congress. The Congress is decidedly our biggest national organization. All the hopes and aspirations of our people are harboured in it. But, it depends for power and strength on movements, such as labour movement, youth movement, peasant movement, women movement, student movement, and so on, and quite reasonably. Once we could inspire the workers, peasants and the so-called depressed classes, the youths and students, as well as the women, with the rousing call of freedom, the Congress would be infinitely more powerful and able to achieve freedom for the country, than it is now. So if you mean to serve the Congress truly and effectively, you must revive all these movements.

China is our next-door neighbour; if we but study carefully only one period of her history, we shall discover what immense service the Chinese students have given their motherland. Couldn't we do as much for our own country? The revival of China has been possible chiefly on account of her students, male as well as female. They travelled from village to village, and from town to town; and thus, on the one hand,

they preached to the common folk the new message of freedom, while, on the other, they organized the country properly from one end to the other. In India we shall have to do exactly the same things.

There is no royal road to freedom. It is a difficult and dangerous road leading to glory and immortality. Whatever is old and obsolete in our tradition and whatever hampers us in the onward march, keeping us in chains, should be shattered to pieces, and we should march freely to our goal of independence like hosts of holy pilgrims. Freedom means true life, and to sacrifice life in quest of freedom is glory eternal. Come, let us put our shoulders under the same yoke, and do all we can so that we may attain independence; let us lay down our life for that noble cause and become worthy fellow countrymen of Jatindranath Das who while dying conquered Death ! Bandé Mātaram !*

* Address delivered at Lahore on the 19th of October, 1929, as the President of the Punjab Students' Conference.

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It gives me great pleasure to be able to attend this conference of the students of the Central Provinces and Berar. I must say, it is not merely a matter of pleasure but a great privilege as well. I do not say this just to flatter you; these are my words of deepest conviction with no exaggeration in them. Indeed, when I am in close contact with the students my heart opens spontaneously, all my hesitation disappears and I can freely express the deepest truths of my life.

It is nearly ten years since I left the university, yet I cannot think of myself as anything else but a student. The only difference is that the university I belong to now is immensely larger and wider than yours. It can rightly be called "The University of Life." I am now engaged in the battle of life from which I gather precepts and experience ever new. Yet I feel that the idealism and the imaginative emotionalism, typical of students, have not wholly abandoned me. Hence, it might not be quite impossible for me to appreciate your wants and indignation, your joys and sorrow, as well as your hopes and aspirations.

Yet I have grave doubts if I have at all competence to preside over this conference. If I am judged from the point of view of my conduct during the student days I am afraid you will find me neither very good nor wholly spotless. I can still clearly recall

the day my Principal had summoned me to his presence and told me that I was suspended from the college. His words still ring in my ears,—“You are the most wicked boy in this college.”

But that is also the most memorable day in my life. Judged from many angles it had opened for me a new chapter of life. This was the day when I first realized what heavenly bliss awaited all of us to compensate for persecution for serving a noble cause! Could any pleasure that life might bring ever compare with this joy? Everything appeared trivial by its side, if not utterly insignificant. I had already some theoretical conception of the ideals of social morality and nationalism, but on this day I passed through the first real test of them all—indeed, a test in the flames. Having passed this most difficult test successfully, I found that the course of my life and its future programme had been decided once for all.

Friends, you must be wondering what an absurd type of person I must be. Instead of having taken up your problems I have started rambling on mine own! But may I ask, why at all am I here? Couldn't you guess my purpose in coming to you? Surely, I have not travelled all this distance to deliver here a long lecture on the abstract concepts in ethics or nationalism; I have come here to place before you the truth which I have derived from my own experience of life. Is it not true that only such advice and suggestions have any value as are garnered in the fields of experience and suffering?

Today, there is a great upheaval all over India. Diverse ideas and ideals are at conflict. Various movements are afoot. Some of them are reformatory

in their nature since they aim at an improvement of the existing order of things. Others are of a revolutionary type, and they want to replace the existing state of things with an order totally new. Out of this chaos a New India is evolving. It is not easy to keep one's eyes directed towards the future. Those who are fresh and young, deeply inspired by the highest ideals, yet self-possessed, who have worked out successfully a synthesis of their own ideals with the ideals of the nation as a whole, who have completed their studies in history and have deduced lessons therefrom—those, and no others, are fit for such a responsible work. Difficult as the times are, they alone would give us opportunities for discovering the path of future progress.

If I were to analyse one by one all the different movements that have recently been started in India, and give my opinion on each of them, it would need a fairly long time, nor would it be possible to complete that in one day's lecture. I would not therefore make any attempt of that kind. But the point I would like to emphasize is this,—if we desire to bring back youth in this age-worn land of ours and consolidate the whole of India into one great nation, we must recast our concepts of good and evil that lie traditionally deep-rooted in us. To put it in terms of metaphysics, we need a complete re-adjustment of all the old, but still current, social and ethical values.

It hardly requires any deep study; a mere casual glance would show that most of the modern movements in our country have no deep origin; they are all extremely superficial. Instead of arousing any response in the soul of the people they have only

touched the outer fringe of the feelings of want and complaint. I do not mean to say that they neither do nor can serve any purpose at all. What I mean to say is that they serve the real purpose but very scantily. If we want to awaken the whole of our people, such skin-deep movements neither would, nor ever could, help us in any tangible manner. National awakening is our goal, and that too no superficial awakening, but awakening of the inner soul. We should therefore aim at rousing the people as a whole, and our chief problem would be to discover a means which could achieve it within the shortest time. We need an immediate solution of the problem.

Ours is a very ancient country with a civilization equally ancient, yet its innate strength and vitality have never been wholly worn out. As a people, we withstood heroically many a vicissitude. Even if we had been occasionally overpowered, we have not yet been completely extinct. There is nothing to wonder at, if we had been at times tired and lethargic, for those were moments of occasional rest essential for the preservation of life. Today also we may be tired and hesitant, nevertheless we are not racially dead. As a race, as well as individually, we have ample reasons to be proud of our creative talents and originality in the sphere of thought and action, and these of course are the sure signs of life. Had there been none such left in us, all hopes of a national awakening would have been lost. Life we have, as also all the ingredients necessary for the regeneration of a people. That is why we still have the inspiration for a dream of a glorious future.

We need an inward awakening which is of the soul. That alone could transform our life in a manner complete and comprehensive. Neither half-way reforms nor mere superficial polish would serve any useful purpose. What we must have now is a total change, leading to a complete new life so to speak. If we so desire, we may even call this change a "total revolution."

Please do not be shocked at the word "revolution." We may disagree with regard to the course it should take, but I have yet to find a man who has absolutely no faith in revolution. On the whole, there is no fundamental difference between "evolution" and "revolution." Revolution is nothing but evolution taking place within a comparatively short span of time, whereas evolution is only another name for revolution spread over a longer period of time. An idea of change or replacement of one thing by another is at the root of both the concepts. Both have their rightful place in this world; indeed it would be impossible to replace one by the other.

I have already said that we shall have to change some of our existing ideas of values with regard to good and evil. I have also said that we need a complete overhauling and recasting of our present stereotyped mode of existence. That would lead us to true national solidarity and give us a seat of glory amongst the great ones of the civilized countries of the world. A life only when it is inspired above the ordinary by some greater and nobler ideals has any value or significance worth the name. A nation need not exist, nay it has no right at all to live, if it has no ambition. I do not, however, mean to say that a nation

should strive hard for progress merely to satisfy narrow selfish ends. It should march onward in order that it might effectively make its own contribution towards the growing liberality and greatness of the human society. It should finally aim at turning this world into a happier and nobler place for mankind to live in, than it has been so far.

In India we have all the ingredients that are essential for the progress of a nation;—material, moral or spiritual, in whatever sphere we may look for them, we do not see any dearth of them. It has not yet been finally determined how ancient India is; but the great fact is there that she is not dead, that she is still living. Say, what is she alive for, if not for a revival of her glory and greatness? She continues to live just because she has something immensely great and glorious to contribute to the world at large.

What is the goal for India? What should be the plan and programme of action of her people? First of all they must save and preserve themselves, then they must make at least some contribution to the civilization of the world. In spite of innumerable odds that were against her, India made contributions in the past which were not negligible. We could, therefore, very well imagine how great and large might have been India's contribution to the culture and civilization of mankind if she had the liberty to develop in her own lines, unhampered by others?

I firmly believe that, if we could infuse into our people endless zeal and inspiration, India would achieve incredible things and would astound the world. I believe also that once this sleeping race of ours

awakes it will easily beat in advancement all the front-rank progressive nations of the West. We urgently need today that magician's wand, a touch of which would spread an impulse, and the people in every sphere of life would hear a call for inward preparedness. Bergson, the French philosopher, speaks of "elan vital," the power that drives the whole world towards action and progress. What could be the driving force of our national life? It is the continual craving for freedom and self-expansion or development that lies deep within us. The spirit of revolt against all bondage is only another aspect of this urge for self-expansion. If you really mean to be free, you must not hesitate to gird up your loins to break the bonds and scatter the obstacles that stand in your way to independence. Your success in such a revolt would amount to attainment of freedom.

Let me leave aside those who have lost all sense of self-respect. The rest of us always feel the injury and insult of serfdom, however different in degree that feeling might be in different persons. When this feeling becomes acutely keen we cannot endure the bondage any longer; and once it reaches this point we become impatient with all that restrict us; and this feeling increases if in the meanwhile we have a foretaste of real freedom however slight. Common people as we are, we usually gather our taste of freedom either from stray experiences in some independent country, or from a study and subsequent rumination of descriptions of the atmosphere and conditions prevalent there. It is a fiery ordeal which a people must pass through before it can secure independence. But what precisely is the nature of

this ordeal? We should try on the one hand to keep our abhorrence progressively keen of all kinds of national humiliation and every distinction of caste and creed, and, on the other hand, we must go on steadily raising the pitch of our eagerness for independence. This indeed is the ordeal, or tapasyā absolutely indispensable in our struggle for freedom. To have the necessary inspiration for the struggle, we must begin with a study of history and trace the downfall of our people; then while we deeply meditate on the true ideal we should carefully study and compare the conditions of a dependent country with those of an independent one.

I am of opinion that the words baptism, initiation and what we call dikshā have only one meaning; they all mean, resolve for the sacrifice of one's life at the altar of freedom. Complete self-dedication is never achieved in a day. The more we are keen after independence the more shall we experience a feeling of bliss in our hearts. Words cannot express this feeling. We shall gradually begin to realize when it comes that there must be some higher meaning and purpose of life. And this realization would immediately lead to a revolution; all our thoughts, feelings, hopes and aspirations will be completely metamorphosed. From then freedom alone will have any value in our life, and we shall worship with all our devotion none else but freedom. There will be a complete change in our attitude to life and in our outlook. We shall then pursue that one ideal alone. It is impossible to say in words what precisely is the feeling during such a metamorphosis, but it may be added that once it is complete we would have a new birth, and would

become a "twice-born" brahmin, or dwija, in the real sense of the term. Henceforth we shall always be tasting independence in our hearts and shall be thinking and dreaming of it. The supreme desire, a desire to be independent, will find expression in all our activities. In one word, we shall be thoroughly intoxicated with the idea of independence, and shall stake everything in our life for this one priceless treasure.

The desire for freedom once aroused in our hearts would leave no peace in life till it is satisfied. We have to adopt every means proper and possible to fulfil it, and to that end we must bring to bear on the task all our strength and energy—physical, mental, moral and spiritual. Much we shall have to forget of what we have been taught so long; many will be the things which we were never taught but shall have now to learn for the first time. Since we shall have to shoulder the heavy responsibility of independence we must renew the strength of our bodies as well as of our minds; and with that end in view we shall have to learn new lessons and must rub off the dead outer crust of life, the transitory enjoyments and luxuries; in a word we shall have to give up our old habits and adopt an absolutely new course of life. Thus strengthened and purified life as a whole would be a picture of perfection and we shall be worthy of independence.

Man is after all a social being. If you cut him off from society you would check the development of his personality. A man must depend very largely on society for nourishment and a comprehensive growth of his body and soul. And society cannot do without the individual. We ought to realize, however, that

unless there is a development in society at large the growth of a single individual has neither any utility nor appreciable value. The ideal of an ascetic or a sanyāsi cannot be acceptable to a society. I refuse to give any importance to an ideal which has no intrinsic social significance. Hence, if we accept independence as the basic principle of our life and regard it as the fountain-head of inspiration for all our efforts and activities, we ought to lay the foundation of social reform on the bed-rock of this great ideal. We shall then discover that the active principle which underlies the idea of independence is after all social revolution.

When we speak of independence of the whole society it ought to imply independence of men as well as women. Along with independence of the higher classes it ought to take into account independence of the so-called depressed classes. Freedom must comprehend freedom of the rich as well as the poor, the young as well as the old, and of the people of all the different creeds. All classes and individuals, belonging whether to the majority or to the minority community should have freedom without any discrimination. Viewed from this angle, liberty amounts to equality, and equality, as we must know, brings us fraternity.

Before a society can be freed from its bondage women must have equal rights with men in social as well as legal matters. Traditions and customs which have lowered the position of certain individuals and classes of people should be ruthlessly broken. The difference in status between the rich and the poor should be abolished. Whatever practices stand in the

way of social progress should with no exception be abandoned. Every one should be given equal opportunities for education and development. We must not slight the young men as mere youths. It will be on the young men and young women that we shall have to place finally the responsibility of all social reform and government in our country. Everywhere and in every sphere, be that social, political or economic, each of us should have equal right, and not the slightest inequality can be tolerated. Equal rights and opportunities for all, equal distribution of property, removal of all social laws that breed inequality, abolition of the caste system, and freeing the country from the foreign rule—these should be the basic propositions of the society we desire to build up anew.

Friends, you might be thinking that all this amounts to an attempt to build castles in the air. Some of you perhaps would call me a day-dreamer, who hardly has any connecting link with the world of realities. I am helpless, if you want to reject me for that; I have to plead guilty to the charge and admit openly that I am a dreamer indeed. And the dreams that I cherish I have spread out before you one by one. They appear to me to possess all the substance of reality. It is from these dreams that I draw my life's inspiration and energy. Had there been no such dreams life would have lost all interest and sweetness and would have become unbearable for me; nay, it would have dwindled into an utterly futile and empty show.

I love to dream the dream of an independent India, radiant in her own glory. I dream that she were the presiding goddess of her own household and

happily wielding absolute rights of directing the destiny of her own children. I dream, we established a supreme commonwealth of India with an independent army of her own, spreading over land, sea and air. I dream, an independent India sent her ambassadors to the different independent countries of the world. I try to fill my eyes with the great vision that our mother India, effulgent in the glory of all that is best in the East and West, standing before a wondering world with her head held high. It is my dream as well as ardent desire that this India of ours should send to the countries of the world her message of truth and freedom.

My dear student-friends, today you may be merely students, but with you rests the future hope of our people, the well-being of our country. Yes, the future of India rests with you, and you are heirs of independent India. That is why I cordially welcome you to share with me some of my hopes, aspirations and dreams. There is nothing else in my possession which I can offer you as a gift. Will you not accept this of me? You are fresh and young, your hearts filled to the brim with new hopes. The nobler and higher ideals of life should be before you. The greater the ideals the better they would awaken the powers that are dormant in you. Hence, dear students, arise, awake. It is never the all-engrossing duty of a student to train himself up in his vocation alone; he must be preparing for ideals much higher and nobler than that. For, men do not live by bread alone, nor does a fair supply of food and clothes solve all the problems of life. I have placed before you a picture of the future. In order to realize this picture still in our dreams, all

of you must actively engage yourselves in some work or other; you must make some sacrifice, however small, so that you may be prepared for oppression and suffering that may come. You must build up your body and mind making them strong enough to meet the demands of the coming days. All the training and education that you may receive should be regulated with an eye to this ideal.

It cannot be denied that the life I have pictured here for you involves endless sorrows and sufferings. Yet, believe me, there is enough joy in it to compensate for them. The path I have traced for you is no doubt difficult and thorny, but isn't it the only path to glory? I, therefore, invite you to be united and sally arm in arm in this pilgrimage to freedom. Only thus shall we gain the highest reward of our human life. Even if the sky be overcast with dark despair and suffering, and we meet with grief and affliction at every step, we are destined to reach the final goal and attain supreme bliss and life everlasting. Bandé Mātaram.*

*Presidential address delivered at Amrawati, on December 1, 1929, on the occasion of the conference of students of the Central Provinces and Berar.

TO THE YOUTH

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Let me express my sincerest thanks to you for the honour you have done me by electing me as President of the District Youth Conference of Pabna. Although I was always very keen to do so, I had no opportunity so long to visit this illustrious town of yours. I am extremely glad that this longing in me has been satisfied today. In this famous town decisions were arrived at, on more than one occasion, in cases of complication in our national life and differences of opinion that verged almost on bitterness. Under the conditions that now prevail in our country, it is my fervent hope that the people of Pabna, who are veterans and have long experience of tackling the national problems, will take the initiative in various nation-building efforts and serve as guides to the rest of their countrymen.

What do we see when we cast a look over the different countries of the world? Everywhere we feel the throb of a new life, and see all the signs of awakening and of dawning of a new era. Young men from one end of the globe to another are back to life; shaking off lethargy, mistrust and all kinds of infirmity and are standing on their own legs. The youth who are the future heirs of the present are not sitting idle any longer. They have girt up their loins to take

possession of their rights and are steadily preparing to defend their inheritance. This upheaval of the youth is no new event in the history of the world, and it would be wrong to regard it as something Western; in every age and in all countries, whenever there has been the need of a breaking up of the old and a creation afresh, youths have had the inspiration of new life. In the heart of the battle-field of Kurukshetra Lord Krishna had thundered out, "O Pārtha (Arjuna), lose ye not thine own manliness," and thereby had voiced the quenchless spirit of the youth everlasting. Therefore, only last year, at a meeting of the young men at Nagpur, I said, "The voice of Krishna was the voice of immortal youth." The cruel picture of destruction had unnerved Arjuna, and for the time being had made him forget that all creation presupposes destruction. This led Lord Krishna to expound in the Sreemad-bhāgabat Geetā the idea that, on the cremation ground of the Kurukshetra the kingdom of God would be founded.

Now, the question is, what should be the ideal of the youths? Their ideal would be to destroy all the existing bonds of despotism as well as injustice and irrational practices, and to build in its place a new society of a new kind of people. Ever since the beginning of history the man has always tried to see beyond the ramparts of the past and present, in order to have a glimpse of the future. Nay, he has repeatedly tried to realize his dreams of the far-away future in the midst of day-to-day realities of life. It was out of this urge that Lord Buddha was born in ancient India and philosophers like Socrates and Plato were born in ancient Greece.

Nothing could be farthest from truth than the notion that every organization of young men, such as Relief Committee, could be rightly called an association or institution of the youths. An organization or institution which has no independent idea or youthful inspiration at its roots could hardly claim to be an "Youth Organization." What are the signs of Youth in life? That there is youth in it is proved if a life never accepts the mere present and its facts and realities as entirely true; if it rebels against all shackles of tyranny and injustice, and wants to set agoing the dance of endless creation in the very midst of death and devastation. One who can completely surrender himself to this cosmic cycle of death and re-creation is a youth worth the name. Whoever is truly young is neither cowed down at the approach of struggle and destruction, nor does he ever fail in his task of creating the new. A man even when old in years could still remain young if he has preserved the inner freshness of his life, but in its absence even a young man would be old although not advanced in years.

Youths had long remained forgetful of themselves, whipped along beaten tracks like beasts of burden; like slaves had they endured their existence without responsibility and had blindly laboured for others, for so long. The course of events had remained fairly smooth as long as the social and national progress remained undisturbed, but wheresoever or whensoever incompetence of those who wielded power retarded or checked this progress and brought misery in its train, the youths had revolted in a body. When the people of Turkey had made over all their powers and obligations to the Sultan and in course of time

degradation set in, it was the rebel youths who had instituted a movement to bring about a new order of things in the country. When the Kaiser and his ministers delegated all the responsibility to the army generals the German youths could not remain indifferent any longer; especially when they discovered that this leadership finally led the whole nation to an inglorious defeat and destitution; they mustered strong and energized afresh the youth movement in Germany. The awakening of young China began only when the Chinese people had completely surrendered their lot to the ruling dynasty at Manchuria and gradually lost courage, independence, wealth, power and all. The more the young men have gained in self-confidence, and with a deep sense of responsibility and determination the more resolute they have been in freeing their own people, the wider the youth movement has spread all over the globe. The awakening that we notice today from one end of India to another signifies that the youths in India have gained confidence and have resolutely applied themselves to the task they have undertaken, the task of freeing their own people.

Some of us foolishly believe that youth movement is only another name for political movement, but that is not true. Beauty and fragrance are revealed in every petal of a flower as it blooms. Every limb of a patient, as he recovers after a prolonged illness, becomes radiant with health and energy over again. As we outgrow our childhood and boyhood and develop into full-grown men we are endowed by Nature with all her bountiful gifts. We enjoy growth in strength and power, physical, mental and moral. There are as many aspects of a youth movement as there are in the

life of an individual or a nation, and none of these many sides of life should be regarded as wholly mean or useless. Young men ought to aspire after and try for a healthy synthesis of all the different aspects of their movement. A youth movement is no political movement, nor is it wholly non-political in nature: it does not aim at boycotting politics altogether. Politics has a definite place in this movement as it has in any national movement. But, for that matter, a national movement is never regarded as merely a political movement, and nothing else.

A nation seeks development through state and society in such diverse aspects as poetry, literature and art, philosophy and science, trade and commerce, games and sports; and these become necessarily the channels of self-expression of its young people. Once there is awakening of the inner soul it gushes forth in all directions in innumerable streams of activity. We only need discover the secret which would release the creative forces lying dormant within us.

Many of us believe that propagation of social or political theories and ideas is essential for the rousing of the wider mass and the youths of a country. As regards the ideals of a state or a society there are innumerable "isms" in vogue these days, such as Anarchism, Socialism, Communism, Bolshevism, Syndicalism, Republicanism, Constitutional Monarchism, Fascism, etc. The fanatic believers in each "ism" have the illusion that once they established their own faith amongst the people, all the suffering and misery of the world would be eradicated. Thus there are many countries in our time where the battle of "isms" is raging very high. But, with me it is a

firm faith that, unless at the beginning we have acquired strength of character, rare in its human quality, there is hardly any hope of redeeming mankind by means of any of these "isms." This was why Swami Vivekananda would say, "man-making is my mission." Men, true in spirit, were indeed the basic need, for without men hopes of national reconstruction or the founding "isms" on any firm ground would be idle dreams. Hence every youth movement should primarily aim at producing men of the truest type; and a man to be true and good must develop on all sides. It would, therefore, be a foolish propaganda to say that all youth movements are inseparably connected with Socialism. One of the chief aims of the movement of the youths is to achieve a rapprochement out of the conflict that underlies all the various "isms."

An youth movement has a national as well as an international phase. In its latter aspect it aims at developing a bond of universal brotherhood. It is largely due to this movement that a brotherly feeling seems to have developed amongst the people of the world, irrespective of country or nationality. The international sessions of the World Student Conference have done much to foster this spirit. Today the youths of the world have at last realized that the feelings, ideals and the inner urge in them are fundamentally the same, however different their time or country of origin may be. When we deeply think, we appreciate what far-reaching effect this closeness and fellow-feeling among the world's young men will have on our international life.

If we wish to smother the fire of hatred and jealousy that consumes all friendly ties amongst

nations we must help to spread this youth movement all over the world. In various countries young men are organizing themselves against all internecine battles and wars in order to establish everlasting peace. At last the youths have realized that they have so far been nothing but mere tools in the hands of the ambitious diplomats of the world. It is they who always march ahead and become fodder for the cannon making a complete sacrifice of their lives even when the war, they knew, was a purely diplomatic thing, and which could bring nothing beneficial to either country. All efforts to establish peace in this world must fail because there are numerous countries which are still in bondage under foreign domination. So long as they are not free the word "peace" would continue to mean subordination and servitude. Yet there is no denying the fact that if peace has ever to come and endure in this world it would be mainly due to the efforts of the youths of the world.

Besides bringing peace to this world, the young men in different countries will learn how to make organized efforts in various other directions. Human nature is uniform all over the world, and the problems of human life are almost the same in all climes and in all ages. It is not therefore hard to understand that the youth organizations of different countries could be mutually helpful to one another, provided they had international co-ordination.

From the national point of view the object of youth movements is to build new nations after new ideals. Before a nation can be built the laws or reasons of the rise and fall in the destiny of a nation must first of all be discovered. We may probably

think that there never had been any inevitable law of causality working in the rise and fall of nations. But there have been many researches in the West in this direction and historians who have worked on scientific lines are not wanting who sincerely believe that they have indeed discovered the law underlying this rise and fall. The quintessence of their finding is that, exactly as there is birth, growth and death in an individual's life, a nation also has all these three phases in its life. Loss of vitality in a people, like that in an individual, leads to decay and death. Sometimes they are totally effaced from the face of the globe leaving just a trace in the pages of history, or even if they are able to avoid total extermination they begin to lead in human forms a precarious life, no better than that of the lower animals. Only when they are particularly fortunate they revive even after falling between the jaws of death. There are scholars in the science of history who have tried to indicate the circumstances under which a dying people or race may be born afresh into a new life. Intermingling of the blood of different races and an intimate contact of their diverse culture could alone lead to a revival of the dying nations and civilizations. Whether we accept the theories of the Western scientists or not the fact has to be admitted that in India a commingling of blood of various races has already taken place, and it is due to the immigration of all kinds of foreign peoples that our India is today a confluence of the diverse streams of world-culture. Who knows, probably it was due to this union and intermingling of blood that the people of India, with their culture and civilization, were being re-born through the ages, and thus they have enjoyed

new life again and again. This perhaps has lent the Indian nation, ancient as it is, the immortality it still enjoys.

Whatever may be our opinion with regard to the effect of intermingling of blood amongst different castes or races, none would perhaps deny that all revolutions in the realm of thought arise from a conflict of different cultures and civilizations. These revolutions are sure tests of life and consciousness in a people. With the advent of the English in India we saw a great confusion in our world of thought. And this indicated the dawn of the modern era. Since then we have been fortunately getting back the insight into things we had lost, and have now learnt how to make an analytical study of our present state of existence. We have made a comparative study of this life of ours with the life of the ancients on the one hand and with that of the free peoples on the other. We have been, it is true, painfully conscious of our existence being inglorious, but we have also been inspired with the vision of a glorious future, and this dream-picture of the future is immensely more brilliant than our glorious past. In a dream, or rather idealism, like this lies latent the seed of a new creation. If we have to arouse our people we must breed an intense discontent in them against the present state of things and teach them to fix all their attention on some high ideal. That is exactly why all our youth movements have the duality in them of a deep discontent on the one hand and a hankering after higher ideals on the other.

Plenty of discussion there has been, and still continues, as to the principles that should guide us in our work, and the pattern after which we should try

to mould our society afresh. I do not propose on this occasion to enter into that discussion; all that I would like to do is to draw your attention to the basic ideal you should bear in mind. Whatever doctrine or "ism" you adopt, if you mean to work for its realization in the life of our people you must take into account the course of events in the past as well as the prevailing conditions and the atmosphere of the present time. Take for instance the case of Russia. While weaving the doctrine of Karl Marx into the texture of their national life, the modern Russians, or the Bolsheviks as they are called, were forced by circumstances to adopt it in a manner practically amounting to running counter to the basic tenets of Marxism. Many of us have an impression that ideas like Socialism or Republicanism are purely of the West. This is sheer nonsense. Who dare say that these ideas were wholly unknown in ancient India? Even in recent times relics of such a social system and life may be met with in remote corners of India. Doctrines or institutions like these are neither of the East nor of the West—they belong to humanity as a whole. I am not one of those who apprehend that India, if she decides to adopt socialism whole-heartedly, would become foreign to herself in spirit. Whatever idea or "ism" we may adopt we must not lose sight of the course of events in history and our present needs and problems, else we shall never be successful in our creative efforts and enterprise.

What makes India so much degraded today? She has all that she needs. Beauty and resources of nature, strength and valour of the body as well as mind, education, wisdom and learning—she is in

dearth of none of these; with these we could very easily build up an image, faultless and perfect, but how to breathe life into it? That can be done only when a strong desire for freedom is enkindled in the hearts of the people. But where to find the magic-healer who might hunt out and administer that "Elixir Vitae" which would instantly quicken the age-worn frame of a dying people with life and energy? None but he who has tasted freedom and has become intoxicated with idea of making himself and his people free could inspire others with the same spirit; and he alone could rightly become the healer we need and an apostle in a national struggle. Let the youth movement in India bring forth thousands of such apostles of freedom.

We Indians have all the resources except one—I mean the power of unstinted self-sacrifice. We have yet to learn how one could be inspired in the life-long pursuit of an ideal in spite of all obstruction and danger. It is this tenacity of purpose which we lack completely; and an absence of this has caused as much of our degradation as its presence has helped the English people to rise. We are not sincere in our love either for our motherland or for our fellow-countrymen; the result is that our domestic fight knows no end while creatures faithless like Mir Ja'far and Omichand are being born amongst us always. Omichand and Mir Ja'far are not dead, they are going on breeding their descent as before. But once we have learnt to love our country we shall be able to make sacrifices and an infinite strength of character and tenacity of purpose will grow. It will not be through endless meditation in the deep recesses of the jungles and forests that we shall achieve tenacity of purpose or moral stamina.

For this we shall have to surrender ourselves unreservedly to a life of selfless activity and a struggle that knows no respite. Strength or stamina is never to be acquired through idle meditation in a closed room or a cowardly renunciation of the world. "It is no use babbling about prowess and strength" a poet has aptly said, "for if these could be attained through empty words India would never have been reduced to what she is in spite of her age-long worship of 'shakti' or the goddess of power and strength." Swami Vivekananda has therefore made it quite clear, how to cultivate moral stamina :—

"Unending battle—

That verily is His sacred worship;
Constant defeat, let that not unnerve thee,
Shattered be little self, hope, name and fame;
Set up a pyre of them, and make thy heart,
A burning-ground,
And let Shyama* dance there."

Once you consecrate yourself to this "unending battle" you would achieve strength and power. It was through such storm and stress that all the free nations of the world came to attain power. Let the young men of India march along this path in a body; we shall then recover our long-lost glory and all ancient wealth along with the priceless treasure that we call independence, and will tread the wide world once again like brave men, heads held high †

* The Dark One, Kāh

† Presidential address delivered at the Pabna Youth Conference, held in February 1929 (27 Magh, 1335 BS)

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I have arrived here to preside over this conference with this conviction in my mind that I belong to you. I am neither very rich in knowledge, nor perhaps in possession of that experience, wisdom and foresight which one acquires with advancing age. It would therefore be indiscreet on my part to preach sermons to you. Nevertheless, I refuse to believe that a man could not be entrusted with responsible duties unless he was hoary-headed. Maybe, Ramsay MacDonald, the present Premier of England, is selecting the ministers for his cabinet from amongst those who are above fifty; but if you study the history of England you will find that in the days of her severe crisis the premiership of the nation had to go to one incredibly young in age. Look at the newly awakened modern countries like Turkey, Italy and China; how they have entrusted their youths with all kinds of responsibilities in the social as well as political sphere.

Whenever a total destruction or a new creation is desired, whether we like it or not, we have to depend on the younger generation with full faith in their abilities. We must hand over all powers and responsibilities to them. If conservation of the existing state of things is the immediate problem, and we have to find and adopt diplomatic measures to that end, we may perhaps choose a grey-headed old man as

the leader of our social and political life. In India, we are at present oscillating between creation and destruction. We have therefore to send out our call to those who are yet in the greenness and glory of their youth with perhaps a touch of recklessness about them.

I know, there are people amongst us who still believe that "youth is a crime." The greatest crime, they think, one could commit was to be young in years as well as in mind. This attitude must go. But, on the other hand, if the young men have to show that youth does not mean indisciplined recklessness, or shameless inactivity, they must do so through active service and sacrifice, which would also prove their competence beyond all doubts, and will show of what calibre they are. For the present, let the older generation look down, if they want to do so, upon the youths as inactive and therefore not of much use; but once these take the decision in their hearts to acquire strength of character, and display devoted service in real life, they will win trust and respect from the older generation through action and achievement, for no earthly power could then dare stand in the way of their progress.

Many of us have no clear conception of the nature, purpose or programme of the youth movement that has spread all the world over. Any movement that some young men or women might start and organize need not necessarily be called a "youth movement." All the youth movements of the world have originated from deep discontent with the existing order of things and the shackles forged from the realities of life. It is in the very nature of the young spirit that it can

never accept the present, and for that matter, what we call the "real" in life as the last word on truth. Especially when it discovers injustice born of despotism and corruption in the world of realities, wherever that might be, it immediately rises in revolt and steps out boldly for a total reform. The youth movement is therefore born of a divine discontent, always aiming at re-building the state and society after some grand new ideal, not to speak of making the individual youths ardent in spirit. And this spirit, this idealism, is the soul of all youth movements.

I do not propose to give any catalogue of duties which young men should follow in the modern age, for that would amount to casting a reflection on your intelligence and understanding. I shall only touch upon a few fundamental points before I shall have closed my speech. The progress of a State or a Society depends on the one hand on development of the individuals constituting it and on their power of organizing themselves on the other. If we aspire after building up a new and independent India, the first thing we shall have to do would be to train up the right type of men, and along with it we should adopt all means to be properly organized in every field, so that we might learn to work unitedly. We ought to remember that the development of the personality of an individual does not bring in its train the flowering of the necessary "social qualities" in him. One has to take as much pains for the development of one's social qualities as for developing one's personality. The chief reason why we Indians had been routed out of the field of international competition and had lost our freedom was a total lack of these qualities. We had

lost all capacity and inclination to work unitedly because of certain anti-social habits and institutions which unnoticed infested our society. For instance, the day we had shown leaning towards Sannyāsa or renunciation, the inner ties of our social and political life became loose, and since then we have regarded individual realization of Self as immensely more important and desirable than the progress of the Society or the State.

Personally, I think it is due to jealousy, selfishness, indiscipline and such other anti-social qualities that we are unable to work unitedly. And as a result we cannot make headway in any of the fields, be that social or political or that of trade and commerce. However, it is not my desire that you should blindly accept the views I have expressed with regard to our national degradation, and that you should not challenge them. I would rather be glad if you make a close and comparative study of the national history of the different peoples of the world and deduce for yourselves the exact reasons for our downfall. Only if we would hold the defects in our national character constantly before the eyes of our countrymen, they would be on their guard in respect of them.

Either we are ignorant, or perhaps we wholly ignore the fact that an imperceptible law underlies all sequence of events in human life as well as in the wider universe. The Western scholars hardly ever accept any event or happening as a pure accident or freak of Fate. Every nation, therefore, has an ideal of its own, and its people must make a complete dedication of their lives in pursuit of that ideal. Once the supreme sacrifice has been made, their thought, word and action

will become attuned to one another; their inner life will become wedded to and one with their outer life; and their whole existence will become harmonized, with one great ideal. They will thus begin to view life from a new angle, and will discover in it an altogether new flavour and joy and meaning; their vision of the universe will be suffused through and through with a new radiance.

In my present address I do not intend to lay any great stress on what might be called "Individual Sāadhanā" or a personal devotion and application to a certain ideal. The thirst for a life of devotion and self-realization has never been wholly absent from the souls of the Indian people, and we have yet to banish the efforts for individual self-development so common amongst us. The ideal of self-development in the West is of course not identical with that in our country. Yet, even in these days of dire dependence and misery, a host of great souls are being born in our midst only because India never abandoned her efforts to create men of the purest character. What we did not care to pursue was the "Collective Sāadhanā"; we were totally forgetful of the fact that all efforts however devoted and sincere they might be, when divorced from the interest of the community at large, lost all their intrinsic value. From this resulted the growth of certain anti-social ideas and qualities in us, leading unfortunately to some anti-social practices and institutions, which like so many parasites have encumbered us, and have sapped up the inner vitality of our national life. To-day the youths of India will have to be disciples of Rudra, the Lord of Destruction, and thunder out, in a voice like His, that they will put to

rout the ghosts of all anti-social superstitions, and will totally destroy all anti-social institutions which have infested our national life like thorny bushes.

The word *Sādhana* has had diverse interpretation and different people have often different ideas about it. My own idea is that it actually aims at a total transformation of the human life. And, transformation of a man's life is never possible by any superficial or external measure,—the inmost core of his mind must be thoroughly infused with an ideal which would breathe a new life into him. If in modern times we have to adopt a *Sādhana* appropriate to the age it should be for the great national ideal of devout patriotism. Whatever is in harmony with this ideal is beneficial to our life and that which stands against it must be abandoned as harmful.

When life has to be built on a new ideal we must renounce the beaten track that are of the old. All the progress that the people of Europe have made has been possible because they did not hesitate to leave the old rut, and look for new roads. But somehow we have a ceaseless fear for the "unknown" and prefer home to the wide world; as a result of this we miserably lack in the spirit of adventure. But this spirit we must have, as it is essential for all progress. I would, therefore, advise you, my young friends, to become mad after the "unknown" and the world at large. It would not do these days to hide yourself in the dark corners of your home, or even your native land. You must travel widely and see the world and acquire first-hand knowledge of all kinds from countries far and near.

Infinite is our strength and power, but we have lost confidence and self-respect. We must revive confidence and this respect not merely in ourselves but also in the nation as a whole. Our love for fellow-countrymen must be genuine, and whatever a man loves and longs for with all his heart will surely be attained.

When we would be mad after freedom the infinite strength which is within us will well up immediately, and we shall be struck with awe by our own discovery of this perennial source of energy lying dormant in us for so long. By means of this newly awakened strength and stamina, I am confident, we shall win freedom.

Before we could bring freedom to our nation we must first of all experience freedom in all its implications within our own souls. Once we have concentrated our mind on the thought that we are free and independent beings, we shall become truly brave and self-confident. And, for a brave soul, no bonds are strong enough to enslave him, nor could anything on earth ever obstruct him in his onward march.

My brethren of Jessore and Khulna, let us in one voice take this vow that we shall be men in the true sense of the word—fearless, free and pure of character. A new and independent India we propose to build up through whole-hearted sacrifice and devoted action. This motherland of ours will then once again occupy her seat of queenly glory, making us, her subjects and children, feel proud of her power and position. We will not stop at any obstruction, nor fear. We shall travel along in quest of the new and the unknown.

Ours will be the duty to rescue our fellow-countrymen from their present abject condition, and we would take it up with devotion and humility. Once this mission is achieved our purpose of life will be fulfilled; and we shall then have led India to her long-lost seat of honour in the galaxy of nations. Come, brethren, do not lose a single moment any more. With bended knees and folded hands let us bow down together before the Great Mother and pray,—

“All our offerings we have spread before Thy feet. Mother! awake.”*

* Address delivered as the President of the “Jessore-Khulna Youth Conference”, on June 22, 1929

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Friends, you have arranged to hold today a conference of the young men of the district of Midnapur and have been gracious enough to invite me to preside over it. I have gladly accepted this invitation of yours. But did you ever stop to think for a while, why instead of a district political conference you preferred to summon a youths' conference? These days, when all over the world, we have so many movements and organizations, why start a fresh one of the youths? Surely the reason is not far to seek. Pressed by the circumstances and having lost all faith in the old leaders you have burst forth into fresh activities and new creations, and these are the facts that have combined to bring about a country-wide youth movement.

Quite a large number of people are busy these days founding Youth Leagues and similar other organizations, but few amongst them have any clear conception of the aims, ideals and programme of such a movement. It would be foolish to consider a Youth League as a so-called Social Service League in another name. Nor would it be proper to convert Congress Committees into youth organizations by a mere change of their names and labels. We ought to realize that a youth movement is a clearly independent movement with a definite ideal and programme of its

own. Those who have lost their chance and position in the Congress, and have little else to do except trying their luck posing as enthusiasts and leaders of the youths, will hardly be of any service in the advancement of the movement. Others who suddenly become patrons of it just because they find a new movement growing under their noses, will also achieve nothing great for this movement.

Please take a stock of your movement, from one end of the country to the other, and tell me, if you can, the number of workers in it who are genuine and sincere at heart, and have joined it selflessly, after a clear understanding and appreciation of its purpose and necessity. The movement is no doubt gaining in impetus, spreading out its aims, ideals and activities, but from the start we must not stop repeating that youth organizations are not mere branches or appendages of any Relief Organization, or the Congress. The aim of all youth movements should be to invoke the New—a New State, a New Society and a New Economic Order should be its efforts to introduce in the country simultaneously with a new and lofty ideal which would inspire people to attain higher human values. One who gets intoxicated with this higher and new ideal of life is sure to rise in revolt against the so-called realities of our present existence. When such restless rebels, inspired with a spirit of ever-growing discontent, rend open the veil of prevailing realities and take a direct glimpse of a higher and noble life, they alone realize the true significance of the Youth Movement, and at last acquire the solemn right of organizing the youths and working amongst them.

If the earlier movements in our country had satisfied the inner thirst of our souls, and had met all the needs of our national life, this Youth Movement would never have come into existence. But, due to the narrowness of our vision, or want of energy, or whatever it was, they could not do so. The youths, on the other hand, had depended for long on others, charging them with the responsibilities of their own and of the nation, only to find in the end that they had been in the wrong; they could no longer remain passive and neglectful of their duties. They shook off all indolence in them and promptly decided that they would take up all responsibilities themselves and would carefully study the results. They have now the faith that one who does good will never come to grief, and also they are confident that once they have taken over this noble cause it would surely end well, for, as the scripture enjoins, if they win the battle the world would be theirs, and if they were overtaken by death they will rest in heaven in peace ever lasting.

The Youth Movement has, therefore a logical origin born of necessity, a movement of only the young men and women,—and it aims at preserving men and society and civilization from age and decay, and tries to keep youth in humanity fresh and active for all time. Like some of the evergreen in nature man has also to keep ever green. It was the youths who launched in every age battles against all kinds of staleness and slavish imitation, want of manliness and cowardice, and blindness and bondage of every conceivable type. This inspired me last year to remark at a meeting of the youths at Nagpur that in

the Bhagavad Geetā the voice of Krishna was the voice of immortal youth.

I must call them humbugs who believe it and preach that the Youth Movement is an imported foreign stuff which was born in Germany in 1897, its originator being Karl Fischer. As long as there has been old age and decay the movement of the youths has also existed. It has of course taken today shape and size to suit the character of the modern age. The idealism that inspires the movement is indeed very high. But even if new it is quite old in its heritage. It was this idealism that had maintained through long ages the freshness and vigour in mankind by continually infusing the life-giving spirit into their inner system. In ancient India people would dream of Dharma-rājya, or an Ideal State, governed by laws of divine justice, and would try from time to time to establish one on the ruins of the old state and society. The Greek philosophers of olden times dreamt of an Ideal Republic. Since then, in all ages, thinkers and scholars of different countries continued to dream of various types of Utopias—some of them wrote about a “new age,” some about a “greater society,” some about the “millennium” or “the golden age” yet to be, and some perhaps about a “socialist state.” In all these dreams and expositions we discover the soul of the world’s imperishable youth seeking, through ages, for an ideal society and an ideal manhood, and trying all the while to expound their visions in words as far as possible. In modern times, in the East as well as in the West, the idea of “superman” is very much in vogue. There are people who flout the idea with a shrewd smile although it would not be wise to ignore

or laugh at it; the truth underlying it is really very great. One need not accept the idea of superman as propounded by the German philosopher Nietzsche, or any of our Indian savants, as the most comprehensive and final shape of reality, but one must at least complement them for their sincerity of purpose because their honesty as well as goodwill towards humanity could never be doubted. Where even the leading minds do not think in terms of supermen would it be right to call their people idealists? And people without idealism can hardly claim to be really alive, nor can they ever hope to achieve anything great in the history of civilization.

We must give a man the taste of an ideal higher and nobler than the ordinary, before his drowsy soul could be aroused and his blood and sinews quickened with new life and energy bringing about a full blossoming of all his inner self. It is a well-known biblical maxim that "men do not live by bread alone"; they require various other kinds of "food" for proper life. They are constantly moved by an urge to know what holds them on to life, what is the aim and purpose of this life, wherein lies its fulfilment. Till they have found the answer to these questions they feel no inspiration, and suffer from a sense of futility which tends to kill all power and possibilities lying dormant within them. But unfortunately taste and touch of higher ideals are no external matters which could be artificially administered. One who has not himself tasted or felt the life-giving touch of an ideal within his own soul could hardly hope to pass it on to others.

Dreamers we had amongst us in the past, as we have them now. Our late lamented leader Desha-bandhu Chittaranjan Das was one of such dreamers, dreaming a favourite dream of his own. And, to say the least, this dream was a perennial fountain head of joy and inspiration to him throughout his life. At last it fell to us to be the heirs of that favourite dream of his. But, we also have a dream of our own which inspires our words and deeds in the sphere of our daily life. Let me expound it for you. It is my dream to organize a society free in all its aspects, and one governed by a state, completely independent. It will be a society where instead of repression individuals will enjoy all freedom in every sphere, with absolutely no trace of distinction of caste or colour; women will be free and will enjoy equal rights with men, and will devote their lives to serving the state and society side by side with men; economic inequality will be totally abolished, and all individuals will have equal opportunities for education and career; work and labour will enjoy a very high place of honour, and idlers will be completely weeded out of it. No foreign domination nor such intervention will ever be tolerated or allowed to make havoc of this ideal state; it will always function as the principal aid or, to be more precise, an instrument of the Swadeshi Samāj or our own social organism. Indeed, this society and the state that I dream of will satisfy not merely all the wants and aspirations of the Indian people but will gradually transcend them so as to develop into institutions which will be the ideal even for humanity at large to attain. Such is my dream, indissoluble and everlasting; and to realize this I am prepared to do

anything in my power, sacrifice everything I might call my own, and suffer all conceivable persecution that might fall to my lot; even death for a cause like this would mean heavenly bliss. My young brothers! I have nothing else but this magnificent dream of mine to offer you. This has always been a source of infinite strength and joy to me and has made even this poor life of mine worth living. Here is the dream I offer you, please accept it and cherish it as your own.

Today in the field of politics we are almost buried under all kinds of abuse, and absurd charges are brought against us. It has been said that we have been trying to capture the Youth Organizations. Such charges make us laugh. Is it not really amusing to find the motive of capturing attributed to us when actually we have all along been trying to help this movement and its institutions? And, may I ask these new friends of the youths, where had they been so long? We, who have all along tried to inspire and develop the youth movement in this country since its inception, are, according to these new friends, guilty of "capturing" it. But these people without having contributed anything to it to this day, are actually bent upon doing what we are accused of, namely capturing the organization for themselves, and yet they are selfless friends indeed of the movement! After the last Calcutta session of the All-India Congress I submitted our programme of work for this year at the general meeting of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee. It was a very comprehensive scheme of work which among other items had one clearly stating that we should do everything "to assist the students' movement, youth movement and physical culture

movement." The programme was published in newspapers and was sent to every District Congress Committee. None raised any objection to it at that time, rather they all supported it. But, by the end of the year, when on selfish party motives it became necessary for them to hurl abuse at others it was discovered all on a sudden that we had been planning to capture the Youth Leagues and other parallel organizations. We might, in fact, plead guilty to the charge that we did not lend as much help or support to these movements as we ought to have done. The result has been that the All-Bengal Youths' Association is becoming ineffective day by day. The local associations of the youths in several districts are no doubt doing appreciable work, but what have been the achievements, during these few years, of those who are at the helm of affairs of the All-Bengal Organization and who parade themselves as leaders of the Youth Movement? True, some of its ordinary members have done a good deal of propaganda work for the movement, and I do not lay my charges at their door, but one may ask what the majority of the members had been doing all these days. In many of the other provinces of India the provincial bodies are highly enthusiastic and active, while the one in Bengal seems almost to have dried up at its source. And, the thoughts and ideas that sometimes leak out often contradict the creed of the Indian National Congress or the Provincial Congress Committees.

Another charge often brought against us is that we do not allow others any scope or opportunity for work. But, scope for work is something which is never to be had from others, nor did we for our part

get this from any outside agent. It is the strong personality in a man that creates its own opportunity and field of work. Method of spoon-feeding does not work at all in this case, whereas we meet people who, like so many babies in politics, continually whimper and grumble that they have had no fair chance in life, and that nobody has created any field for them. But, this sort of grumbling could hardly be any use. We should rather enter life's arena boldly and with confidence, and shall then find scope and opportunity awaiting us on all sides. Besides, what about the so-called leaders of the youth movement in Bengal who have held its key positions all these years? Would they plead that they too had no fair chance, nor scope for work?

Today politics in Bengal is vitiated by all kinds of factional feeling and petty jealousies and rivalries in the field of election. This is deplorable indeed; and in the midst of this party politics we are the worst sufferers, for we are those who have to face the public time and again for co-operation and money. As the people find us quarrel amongst ourselves they dismiss us with plenty of abuse and very little of sympathy or help. As long as this faction continues, there can be no work, and this is no exaggeration. It is for us, therefore, to resolve these differences which have brought about stagnation in the political life in Bengal. Yet, men are not wanting who think that we have nothing else to do than to foster the party spirit and fight with one another on the differences that grow out of it.

The Congress is a political organization, and not a Social Service League in the disguise of a political body. In the political field it is not very unusual for different people to hold different views; and in their opinion, with regard to the different programmes, they almost invariably disagree. A difference in the realm of ideas often implies a difference in the paths of action. That is to say, in politics there is plenty of room for difference of opinion even when people have no personal disagreement with one another, and in life quite often we meet with cases like this. But where these differences in ideas or views begin to tell upon the mind and gradually fan up a selfish ambition, party politics becomes completely vitiated and poisoned. Hence, before we have accused any one of causing factions in our politics, we must first make a careful study of the situation and try to find out who have been mainly responsible for them. It is neither proper nor decent to accuse innocent persons of doings not their own. In politics, occasional difference in opinion is inevitable and a little altercation or even dispute on this account may be unavoidable. But we have to be on our guard that a difference in opinion may not develop into enmity, nor that we make tools of personal attacks and spiteful abuse. Once we have joined a mass movement we could not afford to lose temper and patience, for, instead of making proper use of the franchise if we took up daggers and clubs against our rivals, it would only mean that our country has fallen into evil days. Only the other day some outsiders and students had violently attacked a students' meeting in Calcutta with the purpose of breaking it up in an extremely deplorable manner.

And, who could ever forget the painful incident, which happened at Chittagong just before this occurrence, in which Sukhendubikash Datta, a fourteen-year-old boy of the rarest type, had to make a sacrifice of his life? We ought to investigate thoroughly into these cases of hooliganism and try to find out who the perpetrators are so that we might take proper steps for the future. Once the beast is known we must act, for it is little use hiding its atrocities, for the sake of national or social unity. In the interest of the society we should try to heal whatever and wherever the wound might be.

The tragedy is that, they who take recourse to hooliganism never think for a moment where this would lead them to ultimately. Firstly, they must remember that all men are not equally patient, nor non-violent, and therefore, they may expect to be paid back in their own coin some day. They should also remember that the people in general do not support this hooliganism; hence they are sure to lose all sympathy of the public very soon. It is obvious, therefore, that hooliganism as a technique in politics defeats its own purpose.

Most of the discussions on Youth Movements that are published these days are often merely critical instead of being directive. As a result of this our young men are gradually becoming somewhat aimless and disorganized. They have been taught to find fault with everything, but have been given no proper guidance in any direction. Mention is frequently made of a group of young veterans, popularly called Dādās, often with a twist in the tongue. I had never belonged to that group, nor do I hope I shall ever become one of its members. Yet, I wonder, why some

of its old members are now so bitter and hostile to this group. Is it because their own organizations have gone into "liquidation," or because they have had a promotion in years and have at last become fossilized into Thākur-dādās or "Grand-dads"? If that be so, what is the use of blaming others?

The spirit of dissension and party intrigues seem to be rampant in every sphere of our political life, and we shall hardly find an individual who would not deeply regret the situation. If there were any, he could not claim our consideration of him as a human being, nor need we lose hope on this account. Within my experience of the last eight or nine years it is the third occasion when I find the political sky of our province has been overcast with the dark clouds of party strife. It was Deshabandhu Das who had to withstand the first onslaught, and we who had constituted his following at that time were not spared altogether the blast those clouds caused. A curious allegation was then in the air, and we had to listen to it, that Deshabandhu had renounced his monthly earnings of fifty thousand rupees at the Calcutta bar because he was much too eager for the post of a provincial minister carrying the salary of five thousand rupees! He was even threatened to be driven out of his own province. They drove him out indeed, for while fighting against the narrowness of his own people the Deshabandhu had to die an untimely death, and go out of this world.

The second blast had burst upon the leaders headed by Mr. J. M. Sen Gupta. Many of us were then far away from the active field of all political engagements, but from behind the distant prison bars we were all the while eagerly awaiting the final results

of the crisis. It ended in the ultimate victory of the Congress.

This time it is the third impact launched directly against us, and we must face it bravely. We are perfectly confident that the Congress will once again emerge out of this struggle with flying colours. But, the tragedy is that, in the meanwhile, we shall have to swallow many an affront and endure innumerable painful thrusts. Our remorse would have been very much less had there been no interference by a third party to add insult to injury.

There is one more censure incidentally to be had from some quarters that the present Congress is nothing but a quarrelsome institution. Those amongst us who possess the political spirit would never make remarks of this kind. But there are people who believe that the sole aim of all national work is to build hospitals and to organize relief societies during floods and famines, and these people have a tendency to make such observations quite openly. They easily donate a lac of rupees or so for building a hospital but find no inspiration to pay even a hundred rupees for the sake of Swāraj or independence of India. These people will take the case of a hospital, and pointing out the number of beds it has, and the number of patients it can treat, will make the inquiry what has the Congress to show for its achievements against this? To a person who can ask a question like this what on earth can one say, or how could one hope to convince him that what the Congress tries to do is to eradicate the evil at the very root, for if the primary infection is not treated no cure would ever be permanent. Since political dependence is the actual cause of all our evils, we must rub

that brand off our foreheads before we could hope to become a strong and powerful nation. Thus we should employ all our time and energy, inspiration and resources to achieve national independence. But the real trouble is that there is no standard by which our progress on the road to independence could be measured and recorded for scrutiny and due appreciation by others. It is not so easy in the political field to understand and make an estimate of the extent of success as it is in the case of a high school or hospital and, therefore, those who are narrow and materialistic in their outlook hold that Swarājists like us waste time and money on useless mission. Unless we are able to infuse a deeper idealism into the minds of the people at large we cannot expect in them a greater awakening of what is called the political consciousness, and without this awakening they will never be able to grasp the significance of a political struggle, and so long as they do not appreciate the value of this struggle, they cannot feel sufficiently inspired to make unstinted sacrifice of time and money for the country's independence. As we all know, independence would not be attained unless we have staked for it everything we possess without reserve.

I often ponder over this sorry plight of our people, due to this deep deficiency I have mentioned. It is for the Congress to inspire, among other things, this mental attitude in the people. A nation would never have the courage to renounce all it has, and to struggle on for years together after an idea unless its people have developed in themselves the necessary understanding and judgment and have acquired the capacity of thinking. The only way by which one can help this

development is to infuse idealism steadily into the minds of the people; and this can also be done by touching the very depth of their souls, and by quickening it with an eagerness for self-development and liberty. Once this eagerness becomes genuinely keen they will stake the very breath of their lives, and will set out immediately for the great struggle. A nation could indeed be free only when it would have dedicated itself heart and soul to the cause of freedom.

I was recently asked by a friend of mine as to what were our achievements in Bengal during the last two years. But before I would answer this question I would like to consider the work done in Bengal during the two earlier years, and not in Bengal alone but also in the other provinces. Even if we did not achieve anything very great in the last two years it cannot be denied that the Indian national struggle in its true political colour has thrived in recent times only in the provinces of Bengal and the Punjab. It is because of this national movement launched so vehemently during the last two years in our province that the very word Bengalee excites the deepest displeasure in the government circles.

It is, however, none of my intentions to hold brief in our own favour, nor do I praise ourselves unequivocally for all we have done during these days. I only want to make the point clear for those who would care to think rationally about it, that, under the circumstances prevailing, when we took charge of the Congress in our province, and the environment in which we had to work all the while, we did try our level best to perform all our duties as thoroughly as we could manage. In 1927, the Congress Committees in Bengal

were in a state of utter confusion. The non-co-operation movement in the country was at its low ebb, while our Provincial Congress Committee was, owing to acute party strife, almost in a moribund state. Many of our leaders and workers were still in jail. It was with dismal prospects that we entered the field and tried to infuse gradually life and inspiration into the people and their organizations.

We are today at the cross roads of a transition where we have to hobble along in pursuance of an age-worn and patched-up programme, and at the same time have to get the people to be prepared for the coming struggle and the future beyond. The programme that we had adopted in 1921 is not enough on this day of our struggle. Neither does the number of people, we have been able to inspire with patriotism in recent years, appear to be sufficient. Our demand, therefore, is for a new programme. But where are we to find the new souls with talent and capacity to adopt and work out this new programme? Just try for once to propose a new programme in our present Provincial Congress Committee and you will find that there is no one ready to accept it; and, even if some of the members accepted it, they would never translate it into action, for they would not accept it with all their hearts. There are people who always clamour for "new programmes," but would not probe a little into the depth of the problem and realize that, unless we could make new men, we shall never have any one to treat these programmes with consideration or appreciation.

It is this thought that has been racking my mind since 1927. I have also a fresh programme of my own,

but the time is not yet ripe for its execution. The right time will arrive only when the right type of men will be trained up, men who will take it up with enthusiasm and execute it.

In the meanwhile, I have decided to devote myself to training up a new set of men with the right type of character. For these two years I have been, therefore, laying so much stress on movements and organizations of the students and youths and women. If these movements help in the making of men and women of the right type then alone could the new programme be realized in our life time.

We need new ideals to infuse a new life into the movements mentioned. Mine is the ideal of a complete and unequivocal freedom for the country, as well as for the society. This message of a complete and comprehensive freedom has to be spread from town to town, from village to village, and from home to home. The real significance of independence must be made clear for every one. Many of us have not yet fully understood independence in its organic concept. A nation takes time to realize this. Only a few from amongst us, after constant efforts and through many failures have, at long last, been able to grasp this comprehensive idea. It would be their duty to expound this idea to the nation at large. The day the people realized this magnificent concept in its full import they would be mad after complete independence.

A new social structure we shall have to raise on the sound basis of an all-embracing Sāmyavāda, i.e. socio-political equality. Caste system must be completely abolished, and women should be free to enjoy equal rights and responsibilities with men in

every sphere of life. Economic inequality must not be tolerated any longer, and every individual, irrespective of caste, creed or sex, should be given equal opportunities for education and advancement. We must steadily exert ourselves in organizing the State on a solid foundation by making it completely independent and socialistic in principles.

Our demand, in a few words, is for complete and unqualified independence for India. And, when this is achieved, those who will be born in the coming ages as citizens of this new and independent India will be regarded by the rest of the world as perfect specimens of humanity. Our country will once again be raised to the peaks of world-esteem for valour and noble deeds, and for advancement in the realms of religion, science and culture.

Need I elaborately explain our duties any more? We are to create the New India. Let us, therefore, arise and come together so as to make this great occasion of sacrifice and creation a genuine success. India, our Mother enthroned in our hearts, will occupy once again, in her majesty of a queen, her seat of world-glory. Out of her present poverty she will arise with the resplendent beauty and might of Durgā—the all-powerful Goddess of Victory, and will enrich our life with her divine blessings. Dear brethren, come and unite without delay, and offer your lives for sacrifice at the feet of the Mother.*

* Presidential Address delivered at the Midnapore Youth Conference on December 29, 1929

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My dear young sisters and brothers! accept my sincerest gratitude in return for the love you have shown me by electing me president of this association of young men and women. Today one feels the throb of awakening among the youths from one end of the world to another. And, this world-awakening has also inspired us in this corner of the globe to unite and seek solutions for the problems of life.

After nearly two and a half years of incarceration I stepped out at last through the prison gate. When I looked at the condition of the country and its people, my first impression was that, perhaps due to certain adverse events and circumstances, the nation had lost for the time being, all capacity for dealing with larger ideas and viewing the future from a distance. As a result, the people appeared to have become mean and selfish, fallen to pieces socially, and led by a false vision of truth, been running after a mirage instead of the realities of life. Fortunately enough, we are emerging out of this abyss of despondency and are gradually getting back our normal vision. Young souls, we find, are steadily developing self-confidence. They now realize what great responsibility rests on them; and also feel that they will have to build up the Society for the coming age. Nay, the youths of our country are discovering every day an infinite source of strength

and energy. It is the all-conquering spirit of the Youth Immortal that created the history of independence in every country and in all ages. Today the same spirit is awake in India, and our young men are ready to dedicate their own bones to making thunder as did Dadhichi, the sage of Indian mythology, to help the gods recover the kingdom they had lost.

Although I had many things to say about our national problems I shall refrain from doing it, for I feel it is not possible to put all my thoughts in one single address or speech. Therefore, instead of discussing things generally, please allow me to speak a few words on the specific problem that I consider to be fundamental.

The history of the world is the history of the rise and gradual development and fall of various civilizations. Once in the bygone days, we Indians were independent like many others, and a warlike race as we were, we had occupied a very high position in the world. We also excelled in spiritual, cultural and economic spheres. In the cycle of time we lost the glory that was ancient India. Today we are not merely a slave and dependent people, but we are completely overpowered and benumbed by the charm of a foreign culture which has eaten into the very vitals of our national life. It is a matter of great delight that this dark night of oblivion is nearly over and a national consciousness is gradually dawning on our hearts.

Revival does not set in as a matter of course in a decayed nation and its civilization. In India, however, it has gradually set in through God's grace. This national movement of ours is an expression of the

inward awakening of the Indian people and not a mere superficial excitement. For a verification of my statement you have only to look at the fresh creative efforts that have sprung up in different spheres of our national life simultaneously with this movement. Creativeness is the sure sign of life; and, the signs of creation that are being shown by the Indians in literature and art, trade and commerce, science and religion, and various other fields prove beyond all doubts that the soul of India has re-awakened, and a new chapter in the history of her civilization is being daily written before our own eyes.

Those who make a study of history as a science are of opinion that, with the downfall of a civilization, the people of the land lose all their creative power and take to beaten tracks in thought and action; spirit of adventure and enterprise is at a low ebb in individuals as well as in the nation at large; and people love to live in a fool's paradise repeating age-worn shibboleths. What is needed for a reform of this state of things is a big upheaval in the realm of thought and an admixture of blood in the biological make-up of the community. I am no scientist to tell anything with real authority in this matter. But, I cannot help believing that some amount of intermingling of blood is essential before a new civilization may be born. The Indians, however, require no blood to be imported from outside; such admixture may even lead to harmful results. The case of Burma could be cited for an example. But, within India, especially among the Hindus, there is ample scope for fresh mixing of blood among its different castes, and there is every reason to believe that this would bear good results.

Innumerable are the causes of our downfall of which the most important perhaps is the lack of inspiration or initiative in the life of the community as well as of the individual. Unless we are compelled or whacked from above we do not do our duties, for we have no spontaneous urge for it. In the practical sphere of life we refuse to admit that there are many things which, even if not useful immediately, should be done looking to the future; nor do we always agree that there might be occasions when we should ignore all the wants in the material world and readily sacrifice our lives, if necessary, for the sake of an ideal. As a result of this dearth of initiative, the will of the people as well as of the individual has gradually lost its intrinsic fire and keenness. Nothing great could we hope to achieve unless we revived this long-lost will and initiative in the nation as well as in the individual. But, to awaken this dormant will of ours what we needed most was the inspiration of some high ideal. It has been due to our being unmindful of the higher ideals of life that we have lost the initiative and mental strength. This poverty in the realm of the mind and soul must be eradicated by introducing noble and new ideals in our lives, for without them we would never acquire fresh inspiration and energy to think and work with necessary vigour.

Today the Western world is overspread with all kinds of active nation-building programmes and socio-political ideologies such as Socialism, State Socialism, Guild Socialism, Syndicalism, Philosophical Anarchism, Bolshevism, Fascism, Parliamentary Democracy, Aristocracy, Absolute Monarchy, Limited Monarchy, Dictatorship, etc. I would like to make a

few general remarks on these. Firstly, there is some amount of wisdom in each of these; yet, in a progressive world like ours, it would not be proper to accept any one of them as the last word for an ideal, or the final solution of all our social and political problems. Secondly, it should always be remembered that the results of transplantation of an entire idea or institution in one country from another may not necessarily be agreeable or fruitful. A national institution is the natural result of the history of the people concerned—their thoughts and ideals, and the activities of their day-to-day life. We should, therefore, always bear in mind that we could not build a social or political institution ignoring the history and tradition of the people, and their present condition or the prevailing atmosphere of life.

You all know that Marxian ideas coming from the West have reached our shores like boisterous breakers, and some amongst us are quite excited and stirred up with these. Most of them believe that if we adopt Marxianism in its pure and complete form India would become a land of joy and plenty, and for an example of what we may achieve they point their fingers towards Russia. But, perhaps you also know, Bolshevism as adopted and practised in that country has its points of disagreement with Marxian Socialism as sharp and strong as those of agreement. While adopting Marxian ideas and principles the people of Russia did not ignore their ancient traditions and national ideals, nor the prevailing atmosphere in the country and the problems and demands of their daily life. Had Karl Marx been alive today, I have grave doubts how far the conditions in Modern Russia would

have pleased him, for he believed in his socialistic principles being effective, only if it was adopted uniformly and in an unmodified form in every country. All this I discuss only to make it clear that I am always against any blind imitation of foreign ideals and institutions.

It is also very important to remind you that if we as a dependent people must adopt any "ism" with earnestness it is always nationalism. I am sure, unless we are independent we shall never have a chance for social and economic reconstruction of the country. Our primary concern, therefore, would be to gain independence through a corporate effort. A nation is never the private property of any individual or a community; nor would it be possible in India for any of the communities or classes, Hindu or Muslim, Capitalist or Labourer, to attain Swarāj independently; they must all co-operate and unite in this common struggle for freedom. But, we must also recognize the legitimate rights and demands of the different individuals and never be lasting unless we have based it on truth and communities, for the nationalism we aspire after will justice. I, therefore, refuse to believe that the peasants and the workers, as organized communities, are in any way hindrances to our movement for Swarāj; rather, I unhesitatingly and openly agree that without their close co-operation our dream of independence would be reduced to a mere day-dream. As long as the workers and the peasants are not organized it would be impossible for them to join the national movement or to participate in the different schemes for social and economic reconstruction.

There is no denying the fact that, in all the countries of the world, especially in this land of misery of ours, the educated middle-class community constitutes the backbone of the nation. They are the fore-runners not only in the struggle for freedom but also in all kinds of people's movement. This leadership of the educated class must continue as long as there is no real awakening of the masses. They will also have to come forward as the torch-bearers in the field of constructive engagements. I would, therefore, like to add a few words on the wants and complaints of this educated middle-class community.

Firstly, they are often poor of ideas. Who could ever deny the profound lack of love and loyalty regarding great ideals, among our educated folk? But, what is the reason for this mental poverty? It is because our teachers and professors never sow the seeds of idealism in our hearts while they instruct us. My charges are primarily against the University authorities and the so-called educators. I would ask them, do they allow the breeze of freedom to play freely within the courtyards of our Universities? Do they have any inspiration for independence, those who tread these precincts in quest of knowledge? Yet, all of you must be knowing that in France of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the movement that brought about a flood of awakening from one end of the country to another was directed by her University professors. Cast a glance at our own Universities and you will instantly realize the very depth of our destitution. But that should not be allowed to fill our hearts with despair. Today, if the teachers and educators of India

fail in their duty to train their pupils into real men and to enkindle their souls with the spark of their own life, it would be for the pupils to take the initiative and grow up into men of character through unremitting effort and application of their own.

Next to their mental poverty we are reminded of the economic poverty of our educated folk. There have been plenty of occasions for me to learn how acute the problem of unemployment among them has become. To some of you it would perhaps be news that the economic condition of our educated community is in many respects worse than that of the peasants of our country. Employment in the offices could not meet all their wants, for the total number of the educated youths far exceeds that of the posts available in the offices. It is, therefore, almost inevitable that within three or four decades to come many of them will have to die of starvation. If we in the meanwhile turn our attention from office to trade and commerce, before we die we may see new avenues of earning livelihood open up for the future generations. But, if we still go on chasing jobs from one office to another die we must, and that quite soon; and at the same time we shall leave new graves ready dug for our children and their progeny. Like our brothers from Marwar, who entered the field of business some fifty years ago, penniless and helpless so to speak, we must also make a beginning in the field in a manner as simple and as unassuming as theirs; and through diligence, hardship and honesty of purpose we are sure to attain success in due course. There is no way other than this for the solution of our problem of unemployment.

Instead of entering into a detailed discussion let me say a few words more on our present programme which in my opinion ought to be twofold. Firstly, we should let in streams of new ideas in order that the minds of our people, lying barren and fallow, may become productive. Secondly, we shall have to strive after a co-ordination of the different movements and associations of the youths already existing as well as those which might come into existence. As an urgent measure, we should organize a League of Young Intellectuals so that there may be intimate exchange of ideas amongst those who are engaged in creative activities in the different fields of our national life. Poets, Litterateurs, Artists, Businessmen, Scientists and every other type of people engaged differently should become members of this League. In a word, all the best brains of the entire nation must be brought together and given free scope for cultivating understanding so that they might feel amply inspired to devote themselves actively to the work in their respective fields, with a unity of purpose, thereby bringing health, strength and success to the people at large. Next, we shall have to found a Central Committee which would be helpful in preventing conflicts so often responsible for the frittering away of various efforts made by our youths; and this central organization will co-ordinate and canalize all endeavours for one single purpose. It was with this end in view that only a few years ago the Bengal Youth League was organized. There was more than one reason why that body did not function up to our expectations. But in my opinion the time is now ripe to revive the Bengal Youth League. I firmly believe that, instead of

creating a new central organization, if you enter and infuse fresh life into the old All-Bengal League it would bear good results.

I have already said that I would not try to give a detailed account of the programme we have drawn up. My purpose will be served if I only indicate in a few words our ideal and the projected line of action. Viewed from a realistic angle our wants boil down and fall into three categories: (1) Want of Food, (2) Want of Clothing, (3) Want of Education. We are badly in need of these three. But, when we look at the root cause of the problem, it becomes clear that our national poverty is due to want of idealism and will-power in our people. Unless we develop a "National Will" no amount of food, clothes and education could help us out of this national calamity. Even if the Benevolent Despot of a Government or one of the Local Bodies provided all the material needs, by this alone our manliness would not develop to the full. There is no harm in accepting help from all the different external sources, but, as for these specific wants, our stand should primarily be on our own united efforts. If we co-operated and worked for these things our national will would surely be revived, and independence and Swarāj will be within easy reach.

While ruminating on the problems of rural reconstruction our mind moves precisely in these lines. We ought to be particular about inspiring the villagers to organize themselves, as far as possible, in such a manner that they may themselves meet all their needs in food, clothes, education and health. We may have to send them aid from outside in the beginning, but

eventually they must become self-dependent learning to tackle their own problems themselves, or else all our rural reconstruction efforts will be of no avail. Our villagers, as a rule, have a marked tendency to look for help and support from others all the time, and in all matters. It will, therefore, be necessary for us to put forth indefatigable and ceaseless effort before we could awaken self-reliance in them.

Floods and famines are, these days, almost daily occurrences in our country. Quite a large number of societies and associations take initiative on such occasions and do their level best to render relief; and also the moneyed community offer all kinds of help to the poor and the destitute. We must by all means encourage these benevolent efforts and activities, but at the same time we must also begin investigating into the real causes of floods and famines repeated so frequently. Of course, I entertain no false hope to attain a solution of the problem after a day's inquiry, yet this must be taken up immediately. It is my earnest request to the thoughtful young men and the scientists of our country that they pay whole-hearted attention to this matter.

Our youths have also some definite duty to perform with regard to the various social tyrannies and malpractices that pass for custom or religious tradition. Acharya Prafullachandra Roy has quite often accused our young men of a surprising kind of loyalty to their parents at the time of marriage. But, why say, only at the time of marriage? I am afraid, we become loyal to them whenever it is to our

advantage to be so. Indeed, it would be twisting the truth if we tried to deny the blunders perpetrated by our youths under the excuse of loyalty to their parents. But, I am confident, if the young men become united and make a determined effort to resist the vile and wicked practices prevalent in our society they will usher in a new era for it in no time.

My dear sisters and brothers, now I would like to close my address. Please remember, we have before us the task of building a new nation in India through our concerted effort and action. Our social life is infected through and through with an alien influence in the name of culture and civilization from the West, and this has the slow but sure effect of killing us in more than one sense. In trade, commerce, art and industry, as also in our moral and deeper life, we are on the verge of total bankruptcy. We are therefore waiting for some "vital elixir" to be infused into our life. But who is to fetch that for us? It needs sacrifice before a new life is created, and none but he who has made that great sacrifice offering all he is, or he has, at the altar of the high ideal, can hope to attain the immortal spirit. We are all born of eternity, but closed as we remain within the shell of our narrow self we fail to catch even a glimpse of the immortal self that lies hidden within us. Let me invite you all to the temple of the Mother for we have to take the vow of service at Her feet. Come, let us unite and take the solemn oath that our sole mission in life would be to serve the nation; we shall offer all our possessions at the feet of our Motherland and attain Eternal Life through dedication and Death. Once we took this

decisive step we could be as confident as the Poet who sang :

“ The day is nigh,
When once more
Does India take her seat,
Resplendent and noble,
In the galaxy of Nations great.”*

* Presidential Address delivered at the All-Bengal Youth Conference, held in December 1927 (1 Paus, 1334 BS) at the University Institute Hall, Calcutta

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Friends, let me thank you for the honour you have done me by inviting me to preside over this conference of the young men of the Central Provinces.

We are marching ahead through an age of transition in our national life. It is now time for all young men to put their heads together and decide upon a programme for the future. I regard it a great sign of hope for this age when I find, instead of waiting for the older people to take a hand in the matter, the youths of the Central Provinces are trying, on their own initiative, to solve the basic problems of our national life. I would be thankful and would consider myself amply rewarded for my labours if I could only be of the slightest help in this mighty effort of yours.

There are persons—some held in high esteem by the public—who have no respect for the present youth movements, or confess openly that they cannot appreciate their aim and utility; men are also not wanting who, even though they do not understand the inner significance of these movements, have perhaps joined them because they think that no movement should be allowed to grow in which they do not participate.

Since the dawning of the new era many new thoughts and movements have made their appearance

in India one by one. But that another movement, that of the youths, would at all come into being, in spite of the multiplicity of these, is by itself a justification for the growth of this nascent movement. It is born, I am sure, of a deep desire manifesting itself through the soul of the individual as well as the nation. And this desire is only another name for the innate aspiration of the soul after freedom and fulfilment.

India is now thirsting after a movement which will set the individuals and the nation free from all bondage and open every channel of self-expression and self-development. Some might think of converting the Youth Movement into a subsidiary movement of the Congress, but that indicates that they have failed to grasp the aim and object of this movement.

The Congress is fundamentally a political organization, with a limited purpose. Even in the realm of politics complete independence is not yet its accepted goal. It is therefore no wonder that the young men and women who wished to see life in its entirety, and feel freedom in all its spheres, could not rest content with a mere political body like the Congress, and longed to be linked up with a movement which aimed at realizing all the hopes and aspirations of a human heart. This shows that the youth movement, even when it is not exclusively political in its colour, is not wholly devoid of politics. Its purpose is as vast as that of human life. And since this movement is comprehensive enough to embrace all the varied aspects of life, it cannot but inspire us in our onward march in politics.

The Youth Movement is the symbol of our discontent with the existing state of things. It is a

unique expression of our revolt against bondage, tyranny and despotism stored up through the ages. Most definitely it aims at setting up a brave new world for mankind by breaking all its bonds, revealing thereby a boundless expanse where it could display its infinite creative efforts. A youth movement, therefore, should not be misconstrued as some redundant programme of work imported from abroad only to be superimposed on the contemporary movements of the country. Although a distinctly independent movement, it is essentially genuine, its fountain-head lying very deep in the core of human nature.

The movement has decidedly come into being to meet some specific want and irrepressible desire of the human soul. When one does not understand the underlying purpose of the youth movement it is no use merely joining, or securing dominance over, any organization of the youths. I am of opinion that a mere association of young men and women, unless it possesses the characteristics essential for a youth movement, cannot rightly claim to be called a young men's organization. The basic characteristic of this movement, as I have already said, is a restlessness due to discontent with the injustice of the existing conditions and an innate urge for establishing a new social order. Its principal aim is to break the bonds of every type, and to rise in revolt against such social system and practices as tend to run counter to the dictates of conscience. Young men belonging to this movement have self-reliance for the principle for their life's course, and it is wholly different from being blind worshippers of or faithful followers of the older people who only dictate. It is no wonder if for this

reason some of these older folk look at the youth movement with suspicion and often with disgust.

Thus, the primary object of this movement is to direct our entire life along various new channels and revitalize it with inspirations of a new ideal. This ideal in its turn would add a new meaning and impetus to our proposed rehabilitated life. A complete and comprehensive freedom that inspires self-reliance in everything is the goal for this ideal. In human life freedom and true success are inseparably connected with each other. Unless one is completely independent one cannot fully develop his personality. We, therefore, add so much value to independence because it leads human life to its fulfilment.

The scope of the youth movement is as vast as life itself. It will necessarily have as many sides as there are in human life. In order to invest our body with vigour and vitality we must take to sports and athletics, and in order to quicken our mind with freedom and new learning we must have a new type of literature, an improved system of education and a very strong moral standard. If we propose to revitalize our society we shall have to make, with a stern hand, a clean sweep of all the narrow traditions and practices, and institute a brave and new social order with ideas equally new. We may even have to test and evaluate the current social and ethical standards in the light of ideals more in keeping with our age, and may perhaps have to introduce such moral and social principles as would act like beacon light for our course through the future.

While trying to give effect to our new thoughts and programme, we shall naturally come into conflict

with prevalent ideas and with all kinds of powerful parties with vested interests. But we must face them undaunted. This movement of the youths will always have to make its way through innumerable conflicts and obstructions. Moments may arrive when, blocked up on all sides, we its members might feel as though cut off from the rest of the world. In such crises it would be best for us to recall the memory of that mighty soul of Ireland who in the face of imminent danger had boldly remarked, "There will be one solitary person who would deliver Ireland from servitude exactly as there has been one saviour to deliver the world from sin." Immediately you have taken to the ideal of the youth movement and have tried to adopt the principles of freedom in every sphere of life you will be assailed from all sides with hosts of enemies and parties with vested interests who would join hands to overthrow you. It is easier to fight a strong enemy force when it attacks from one direction, but when the attack is simultaneously from all angles it may be next to impossible to take a stand against it. Hence, those who would organize any youth movement should always be prepared to face enemies of the most difficult type, under difficult conditions.

There is one more matter we should always keep in mind. In a political or a labour movement the situation is often such that one cannot help expressing sympathy for the thoughts and feelings of the common mass in order that one's influence with them might be maintained; but you who choose to join the youth movement must totally abandon all desire for popularity. You may often be called upon to build up a public opinion, or, if need be, to curb a popular enthusiasm.

If it be your intention to find a solution for the fundamental problems of our national life you will have to stretch your vision far ahead of the people of your own time. It is usually difficult for the common folk to look beyond the present and have a clear vision of the future. When you would try to seal the course of any national evil or danger, so that it may not spread nor ruin our future, it is possible the public would refuse to accept your suggestions. You must develop enough courage to be able to take a strong stand then, and even when friendless and alone to be able to fight against the rest of the world. He who tries to float eternally in the stream of popularity may perhaps win applause now and again from the people, but can never make a name worthy of going down in history, nor can contribute anything worthy of being placed on record. If we would undertake to make national history we should be prepared to face countless opposition and hardships. We must not wonder if the most selfless services of ours is paid back in abuse and insult, and the closest friend becomes a bitter enemy.

But, since the divinity in man is not dead altogether, even these days of prolonged abuse, misunderstanding and suffering have an inevitable end. In the meanwhile if we have to die for the sake of our deepest faith, that death would mean immortality for us. We should, therefore, keep ourselves ready for every emergency. It is because of its risks and adventures that our life is worth living; and a life without sorrow, suffering and sacrifice would surely lose all its interest.

Roughly speaking, every youth movement has five aspects,—political, social, economic, physical and cultural,—and an object twofold in character. In all its five aspects it aims at liberation from every bondage, and having attained that liberty it aspires after self-expression and self-fulfilment. Thus, basically it is destructive and constructive in one. Unless you destroy on the one hand you cannot build on the other. That is why in nature making and breaking are to be found going on side by side. It would be a blunder to imagine that destruction was wholly dangerous and undesirable, or that a process of construction could be carried out without some previous demolition. But, it would also be equally wrong if we regarded destruction to be an end by itself. Whenever in any sphere of life the urge for independence grows intense, or is widespread, many a thing has to be cleared away, or perhaps even destroyed, with an iron hand. A compromise with fraud, falsehood, bondage and inequality is beyond our dream, and unless we applied all our strength to the task of eradicating them we could not hope to loosen their hold on us. When we feel it to be our duty to march ahead it would be meaningless to cast a longing look behind and linger.

Most of the modern movements extant in India and in other countries are reformatory in spirit. They only graze the fringe of the life of the people, instead of giving it a new shape. What we ask for is a complete overhauling and reshaping of things and not mere tinkering that often passes for reform. Both personal and social life of ours should be rebuilt entirely. But before we try it we must form a concept of freedom, newer and nobler, to inspire us. The word

freedom has been interpreted differently in different countries and in different ages. Indeed, as in every other country, the concept of freedom has evolved in India through a gradual process. Today it signifies complete freedom from all kinds of bondage; or we might say, this is the interpretation that appeals most to the youthful mind. We are not satisfied any longer with marching only half-way; our demand is for complete independence in every sphere of life. Once we have loved freedom for freedom's sake we could never endure anything that fostered bondage or inequality. We should be always on our guard so that we might apply the basic principles of total freedom to all spheres of our life, be that political, economic or social. Our motto would be to allow every opportunity to the flowering of the inborn potentiality of all human beings, irrespective of sex. But it is a motto more easy to profess than to pursue.

Friends, I shall not waste your time recounting in detail the programme of those who want to develop and expand the youth movement in our country. If I could only explain the aim and object of this movement my purpose would be served. It is an extremely far-reaching ideal touching perhaps the farthest reach of human imagination. We aim at a total transformation of our life, and would create a newer and brighter world for ourselves as well as for humanity at large. It is the spark of freedom that alone could enkindle the fire lying latent in us and could inspire us to leap eagerly into the stream of perennial action. The first and the foremost problem with us is, how to arouse in our hearts and in those of our countrymen a deep desire for this freedom. If we truly wish to feel a burning

desire for freedom in our hearts we must, to begin with, feel as deeply as we can the pain and suffering of servitude and bondage. When this feeling reaches its full intensity we would realize that life is not worth living without independence; and with a gradual deepening of this realization a day will come at last when our entire life, our very existence, would be thirsting profoundly after freedom.

That would be the correct psychological moment for us to become ardent apostles of freedom. Drunk deep with the desire for freedom we, men and women alike, will be marching from village to village and from door to door, preaching the new message of independence, which would gradually fill all the channels of our life, and in them will flow fresh vigour and vitality. The destruction that might set in on one side will be well compensated for by construction on the other. Political, economic, social and every other field will at last be flooded with a new inspiration—the inspiration of freedom and equality. Custom and tradition that stood through ages in our way, and all the false values of life will be shattered to pieces making the road for creation smooth and easy. If we succeeded in building a new society based on freedom, equality and universal brotherhood, we would solve not merely our own national problem but an immensely wider problem of the world at large.

India is an epitome of the world, and almost all the problems of the world are to be found in this country. Thus, the solving of any problem in India amounts to the solving of a problem of the world. India has survived through ages indescribable hardship and suffering, and innumerable struggles and conflicts, and

is very much alive even to this day. That is only because she has a special "Sadhana" or a life-mission of her own to be fulfilled. She must save herself today, for it is for her to save the wider world. It is very important that she must be free, for her independence is necessary as she, our motherland India, is destined to make a unique contribution to the culture and civilization of the world. Indeed the whole world has been waiting today in suspense for India to make this contribution; and the world is the poorer without this.

Dear friends, ours is a very difficult and responsible task. In every age and clime it was the youths who had held aloft the torch of freedom. We would now mould our lives after the example set by the youths of other countries. Once we stood up on our own legs, we could very easily achieve whatever they have achieved. It is an age of transition we are living in, and the fate of India rests today in the hands of her youths. I am quite confident that the young men and women of our country have realized what great responsibility is theirs. I know it for certain that out of their self-sacrifice, suffering and heroic achievement will emerge the independent India we dream of—an India where men and women will be born free and will have equal opportunities for education and self-development. There is no doubt that India will be free. The only question is, when will that freedom be attained? True, we have been born slaves, but we shall die free people, in a free land; come, let us take the oath that we shall die having made India free. And, if at all we fail to see her free, may we sacrifice our lives in our struggle to achieve her freedom.

Thorny indeed is the road to freedom, nevertheless, it is a road also to immortality. My dear brothers and sisters of the Central Provinces, I ardently welcome you all to this path of eternal glory. Bandé Mātaram !*

END

* Address delivered on November 29, 1929, as the President of the Youth Conference of the Central Provinces.